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# STUDIES ON PASCAL.

BY THE LATE

ALEXANDER VINET, D.D.,

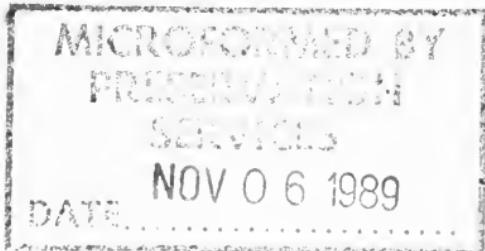
PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN LAUSANNE, SWITZERLAND.

Translated from the French,

WITH AN APPENDIX OF NOTES, PARTLY TAKEN FROM THE WRITINGS OF  
LORD BACON AND DR CHALMERS,

BY THE

REV. THOMAS SMITH, A.M.



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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

NOTHING but a strong, and almost conscientious, objection to anonymous authorship, excepting in those cases in which the mode of publication makes it necessary, could have induced me to place my name on the same title-page which contains those of Pascal and Bacon, Vinet and Chalmers.

Having returned some time ago from India as an invalid, I happened to take up M. Vinet's *Etudes sur Pascal*, and was greatly interested with its perusal. Having mentioned it to a friend, who is a great admirer of Vinet's writings, but who was not acquainted with this work, he suggested to me that I might render good service by translating it. Having then no regular employment, I was not unwilling to follow his advice. In the course of the work, I was constantly reminded of passages in the writings of Lord Bacon and in those of Dr Chalmers, and resolved to append some of these passages in the form of Notes. But ere this part of my task was entered upon, my hands were full of work ; and I have not been able to carry it to the extent that I ori-

ginally contemplated. Still, I believe that the student will find an interest in comparing the thoughts of these four great men, in the comparatively few specimens that I have given. Chalmers has been termed the Scottish Pascal, Vinet has been termed the Swiss Chalmers; and Pascal, Vinet, and Chalmers, were all distinguished in no ordinary degree by their intense Baconianism.

M. Vinet's work is a posthumous one, and consists of the following pieces :

I. A part of a course of popular lectures on the French Moralists, delivered at Basle in 1832-33. Portions of this course were published in the *Semeur*; and the portion on Pascal was prepared for publication by the author, but not published till after his death, in the volume from which it is now translated.

II. to VII. are from a course of lectures on the Literature of the 17th Century, delivered to the Academy of Lausanne in 1844 and 1845. Some of these were published in the *Semeur*, and others in the *Revue Suisse*. No. II. was first published in the volume from which it is now translated. It will be observed that these were written after the publication of M. Faugere's edition of the *Thoughts*, while No. I. was written before it.

VIII. is a review of two works on the Life and Writings of Jacqueline Pascal, apparently contributed to, and extracted from, some periodical, probably the *Semeur*.

IX. is a fragment dictated by M. Vinet on his death-bed, "on the 10th April 1847, in the extremity of his last illness." It was published in the *Semeur*.

X. This is a reprint of three articles published in the *Semeur* in 1843. It will be seen that some of the lectures are borrowed pretty freely from these. This is especially the case with that on the *Pyrrhonism of Pascal*. Yet, on account of slight differences, I have followed the example of the French publishers, and have not curtailed either of the pieces.

And now I have only to express a hope that I may be found to have rendered not an unacceptable service to the British public, by putting within their reach a book which can scarcely fail both to please and to instruct them ; especially do I hope that our Theological Students will find this volume repay a careful study. The rendering is almost verbal ; probably critics may think it too literal. But Vinet's mind had so little of what is commonly regarded as characteristically French, that it appeared to me that nothing more was needful, in order to make his book an English one, than to substitute English words for French.

T. S.

EDINBURGH, October 1859.



# STUDIES ON BLAISE PASCAL.

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## I.

### OF THE BOOK OF THOUGHTS, AND OF THE PLAN ATTRIBUTED TO PASCAL.

PASCAL's *Thoughts* are not a book. We must bear this observation in mind, if we are to judge of them aright. They are not a book; perhaps they may be two, or even more. They are—if we must give them a name and define them—they are Pascal himself,—whole Pascal, excepting in so far as he was a geometrician, properly so called, and a natural philosopher. The *Thoughts* are only the papers on which this great man threw out, from time to time, all that occupied his powerful mind, until the excess of physical malady reduced him to complete inaction, and put, so to speak, the seals upon his genius. Great pains have been taken, and not without success, to reduce these scattered materials, by means of art, into a kind of whole. Sometimes, perhaps, the secret of the writer has been guessed; possibly, in certain cases, his intention has been entirely misunderstood. It may sometimes be asked, in the course of the perusal of these fragments, whether this or that passage were intended as it is supposed to have been, or whether its intention were not exactly the contrary. Death is dumb; it

answers not, nor ever will. Who knows whether, in some instances, what we take to be the thought of Pascal be not the thought of his opponent,—an objection, a challenge, to which the great thinker meant to pay attention when he should have leisure? Who knows whether we do not ascribe to him some of the opinions of those whom he was preparing to refute? And even when we are sure that we have his thought, are we equally sure that we have it in its proper point of view, in its proper direction? Do we know whence it came, or whither it was to go?

Such are questions which an unprejudiced reader must ask in perusing Pascal's *Thoughts*. It must be admitted also, that, in several passages, the negligence of a revision which was not conclusive, and which gives us only the rough sketch, the vague outline of the author's thought, throws great obscurity over the face of things. But, notwithstanding all this, it were exaggeration not to admit that the *Thoughts*, arranged by industrious hands, present, if not a regular whole, at least a generally clear sense of each one separately, and enable us to catch a glimpse of the great outlines of a majestic plan, whose accomplishment was only prevented by death.

Among Pascal's *Thoughts*, a certain number, especially in the first volume, did not enter into the plan of which we speak. They relate to subjects so remote from his principal design, that they should probably be referred to a much earlier period of his life. Such are his reflections on *Authority in the Matter of Philosophy*, on the *Art of Persuasion*, on *Geometry*, and some other thoughts on *Philosophy and Literature*. But, with the exception of these pieces, there are few pages in this collection that ought not to be regarded

as materials stored up for the monument which Pascal was preparing. This monument, to the construction of which he had, several years before his death, devoted all the energy and the life that remained to him, was to be a general, and, so far as possible, a complete, apology for the Christian religion. The fragments which he has left indicate this design with sufficient clearness, without so distinctly showing us the method which the author had prescribed to himself, or the extent of ground which his work was to cover.

But we have a valuable document on this subject, in the preface which an intimate friend of Pascal prefixed to the first edition of his *Thoughts*. From it we learn that, about twelve years before his death, this great thinker unfolded *vivâ voce* to his assembled friends, the whole design which he had formed, and the course which he proposed to follow. This exposition is, as to its substance, too remarkable to admit of our believing for an instant that it is spurious. It is too worthy of Pascal, it too visibly coincides with the fragments which remain to us, it connects, arranges, and elucidates them in too striking a manner, to admit of the supposition that the fragments and the exposition did not proceed from the same mind. It is, in every respect, easier to believe in its authenticity, than to admit that it was possible that another mind should have conceived, at the same time with Pascal, a plan perfectly similar to his, and a plan so original, so new, and, moreover, so superior to the spirit which then prevailed in the science of religion.

This plan I am going to attempt to reproduce, without making any change in the exposition of Pascal's editors, except that of the language. The ideas are those of our age; the point of view is from our century rather than the

seventeenth. All that is required is to suit modern expressions to a conception that is really modern. I owe a single word of explanation to my audience at the outset. What, it may be asked, has an apology for Christianity to do in the midst of a review of the French moralists? This we shall see ere long. We shall be convinced that the work of Pascal is, as to its most essential part, a real treatise on moral philosophy. To develop this assertion at present, would be to anticipate the analysis which I am about to undertake. This I shall not do. It is enough to have informed my hearers, in a single word, that I am not wandering beyond the well-defined boundary of my subject.

Apologies for Christianity have been, in general, more or less, the result of circumstances; and that in two ways. Often they have been designed to repel a recent attack, directed on a particular point. More frequently, without being so visibly called forth by the necessity of the moment, they have been, under a great appearance of generality, a special antidote to the form of infidelity which prevailed at the time of their appearance. Sometimes even, abandoning some of their means, and taking, so to speak, their adversaries in flank, they have given prevalence to one side of the Christian truth, one reflection of its light, one ray of its beauty, one characteristic of its greatness. It is in this spirit of condescension and of caution that M. de Chateaubriand conceived his *Genius of Christianity*. In all these several cases, the apology, whatever may have been its extent in other respects, has assumed an essentially defensive attitude, guarding its own territory, doing its best to protect it, but making no inroad, on its own part, into the territory of the enemy.\*

\* See Appendix, Note A.

Still we can conceive another kind of apology, which should not wait for a challenge, but be itself the challenger ; which should not have respect to the requirements of one age, but to those of all times ; which should not attack one species of infidelity, but which, having dug out from the depths of the human soul the principle of all infidelities, should embrace them all, anticipating those that are yet to be produced, and preparing an answer to objections which have not yet been stated. For this purpose, we should perhaps find it penetrating farther into doubt than the boldest doubters ; digging under the abyss which they have dug ; becoming itself incredulous, in its turn, with a more determinate and deeper incredulity ; in a word, opening and enlarging the sore, in the hope of reaching the germ of the malady, and rooting it out. This sort of apology is so different from the other, that it demands to be called by another name. Religion no longer appears as a pleader, but as a judge ; the mourning robe of the suppliant is laid aside for the toga of the prætor ; the apology is no longer vindication merely, but eulogy, homage, adoration ; and the monument which it rears is not a citadel for defence, but a temple for worship. Such is the apologetic of Pascal.

I have re-read it in order to expound it to you. With what feelings ? I cannot express them. Every part of our being is capable of enjoyment ; but beside, perhaps above, the pleasures of taste, of imagination, of sensibility, there is a joy of the understanding, which no writer affords so often and so fully to his reader as the incomparable author of the book which we are studying. I could not sufficiently admire that freedom of thought which always goes direct to the bottom of a subject ;—that manliness of genius which

braves all the consequences of its own boldness ;—that vigour of conception which is always mistress of its object, always holding it with a powerful grasp, and allowing itself to be led by it, without ever relaxing its hold, even into the depths of abstraction, where, Proteus-like, it seeks to vanish into vapour ;—that extreme clearness, which, in subjects of such a nature, can belong only to genius ;—that fruitfulness of philosophical invention, which leads you, by the way of patient and apparently ordinary reasoning, to conclusions which are discoveries, and which extort from you a cry of surprise and admiration ;—and lastly, that style, gentlemen, that style perhaps unrivalled, for never style was so completely true—never style grasped the thought so closely. It is not interposed between you and the thought, for it is itself the thought ; naked, concentrated, nervous as an athlete, it is all strength ; it is beautiful in its nakedness ; and even the images that it employs, are to it what the cestus is to the hand of the pugilist, not a garment, but a weapon. In it, as in Montaigne, the author, the writer never appears : but with this difference from Montaigne, that when it conceals the writer, it is not that it may the better exhibit the individual, or the *I*. There is nothing of the *I* with Pascal. The hero—shall I say ?—or the patient of his book, is *man* ; and when Pascal speaks in the first person, it is because he substitutes himself, as their representative, for the whole human race. This bold personification gives to his book a dramatic character, very rare in a work of this nature. This book, apparently didactic, is by turns, according as the subject suits it, a drama, a vehement satire, a philippic, an elegy, a hymn. Pascal despised poetry : did he know that he was a great poet ? In one mould seem to

have been cast some of his paragraphs and some of the strophes of Lord Byron. What do many of Pascal's readers seek for in the *Thoughts*? Pascal himself; a rare individuality, an extraordinary nature, a soul. One may read Pascal as he reads *Childe Harold*.<sup>1</sup>

Pascal's book may be regarded, so far at least as the part of it which enters into the domain of apologetics is concerned, as the itinerary of the soul towards faith, or as a history of the reasonings by which, in succession, it has been brought to it; or as an explication of the slow internal process which God has made use of to subdue its resistance, and to lead it vanquished to the foot of the cross. Is it the history of Pascal himself? The form of his discourse, the impassioned and heartfelt character of his dialectics, would perhaps warrant us to believe so: but this supposition derives little support from the information which we have respecting the life of this great man. It is more probable

<sup>1</sup> "Man is but a reed, the weakest in nature; but he is a reed that thinks. There is no need of the whole universe in arms to crush him. A vapour, a drop of water, is sufficient to kill him. But though the universe were to crush him, man would be nobler than that which kills him, because he knows that he dies, and the universe knows not of the advantage that it has over him" (Part I., Art. iv., § 6).

"What a chimera, then, is man! What a novelty, what a chaos, what a contradiction! Judge of all things, weak earth-worm, depository of truth, mass of uncertainty, the glory and the scouring of the universe. If he vaunt himself, I abase him; if he abase himself, I vaunt him: and I always contradict him, until he comprehend that he is an incomprehensible monster" (II. i. 5).

"It is indubitable that the soul is either mortal or immortal. This must make an entire difference in morals. And yet philosophers have treated of morals without reference to this. What strange blindness!" (II. xvii. 69).

"The last act is always bloody, however fair be the comedy in all the rest. A little earth on his head, and farewell for ever" (*Ibid.*).

that he made, in thought only, a journey which Providence did not require of him to undertake in reality, and that his philosophical imagination made him acquainted with all the situations through which a profound heart can pass before it arrive at conviction and repose. Be this as it may, there is, in Pascal's book—his drama, as we have ventured to call it—a person, real or fictitious, a protagonist ; and to analyse the work of Pascal, is, in other words, to unfold the successive thoughts of this mysterious character. This is what we are about to attempt.

Hungering for truth, and seeking for certainty as every being in nature seeks for a point of support, this man has given himself up with ardour to the study of geometry ; and in one respect he is not disappointed in his expectation. Nevertheless he has soon perceived, that in this career he attained only artificial truths, the point of departure being but a supposition, and each consecutive proposition being but the transformation of a preceding truth.\* He has seen that this science did not lead him to the true qualities of things ; that concrete truth remained always outside of those so certain and so rigorous demonstrations ; and that what remained most precious in them, independently of their applications to the purposes of life, was a method, but really the only true method, for the pursuit of truth. By this method he will abide ; and rigorously will he apply it to everything that is within the province of the understanding.

Among the subjects that come under his consideration, religion holds the first place.

He wishes to conduct a man to Christian convictions. He might set out at once from the objects of these convic-

\* See Appendix, Note B

tions,—from God, Revelation, the Mysteries. But he has observed that in many things the will influences the belief, sometimes helping and sometimes hindering us in believing ; that, if it be not right to apply the will directly to the belief, it is legitimate to turn it on the side of examination ; that examination is so much the more interesting as its object is nearer to us ; that, in the question of religion, the interest consists, on the first approach to it, in the relations which it bears towards us ; that, consequently, we should first speak of ourselves, and that thus we should not proceed from religion to man, but from man to religion,\*—not from the object to the subject, but contrariwise from the subject to the object.

This procedure is so much the more natural, so much the more imperatively prescribed, as the prejudice or the indifference of man with respect to religion proceeds from this, that he does not know himself, all-inclined as he is to attend to himself. Take advantage of this so natural interest to discourse to him of his own being, and to make known to him, respecting his nature and his condition, things which he does not know, or which he forgets, or which he does not see in the connection which constitutes their importance and their value.

The writer first confines himself to the most general consideration of man ; he contemplates him as compared with the universe, and shows him balanced between two infinities, whether as respects his body, or as respects his mind (I. iv. 1).

But our characteristic is, that we have not a determinate place in the universe—(every being has its own) ;—but that we feel that we are not in our place ; and that we aspire, by

\* See Appendix, Note C.

continual and indefatigable efforts, after a happiness and a light of which we cannot even form an idea, that we live always in expectation or in regret, that we live in the past or in the future, never in the present, even though the present be materially happy. “Our miseries are the miseries of a great lord, of a king dethroned.” . . . . “Man is great, inasmuch as he knows himself to be miserable.” . . . . “Notwithstanding the view of all our miseries, which touch us, and from which we cannot escape, we have an instinct which we cannot repress, which exalts us” (I. iv. 3, and v. 4).

What is astonishing in man, is the empty space capable of containing many great things; the sublime efforts which end in falls; the infinite desires which are satisfied with a nullity; the search for true good where it is not; the character of a being displaced, wandered, lost; the disproportion between the means and the end.

1. Man pays respect to the human soul, the superior and divine part of his being. What is a better proof of this than his immoderate desire of the esteem of his fellows? It is in their soul that he wishes to have an honourable place. But respecting the human soul in the soul of his fellows, he does not respect it in his own; for, satisfied with qualities with which he has decked his false image, he is much less careful to clothe his own being with these same qualities.

“We are not contented with the life which we have in ourselves and in our proper being: we wish to live an imaginary life in the idea of others; and in order to this, we strive to seem. We labour incessantly to embellish and to preserve this imaginary being, and neglect the real being; and if we have either tranquillity, or generosity, or fidelity,

we are anxious to have it known, in order to attach these virtues to this being of the imagination ; we would rather detach them from ourselves in order to join them to it ; we would willingly be cowards to gain the reputation of being brave. Great proof of the nothingness of our proper being, that we are not satisfied with it without the other, and that we often give up the one for the other" (I. v. 1).

"Vanity is so anchored in the heart of man, that a footman, a scullion, a porter, vaunts himself and wishes to have his admirers, and even philosophers wish the same thing. Those who write against glory wish to have the glory of having written well, and those who read what they have written wish to have the glory of having read it. Perhaps I who write this have this ambition, and perhaps those who shall read it will have it too" (I. v. 3).

"If, on the one hand, this false glory which men seek after is a great proof of their misery and their degradation, it is also a proof of their excellence : for whatever possessions he may have upon the earth, whatever health and essential comfort he may enjoy, a man is not satisfied if he be not esteemed by men. So highly does he estimate the judgment of man, that, whatever advantage he may have in the world, he considers himself unfortunate unless he have also a favourable place in the judgment of mankind. This is the fairest spot in the world ; nought can turn him from this desire, which is the most ineffaceable quality of the human heart.

"To such an extent is this the case, that those who most despise men, and who make them equal with beasts, still wish to be admired by them, and contradict themselves by their own feelings ; nature, which is more powerful than all their reason, convincing them more strongly of the great-

ness of man, than reason convinces them of his baseness."<sup>1</sup>  
(I. iv. 5.)

2. Man has an inextinguishable craving for truth. But, in his actual condition, what obstacles are opposed to his attainment of it! The principal instrument of this quest is the reason; but this power, which ought to be independent, is supplanted by opinion, distracted by the senses, altered by sickness, influenced by the will. The principles from which it sets out are themselves often subject to dispute. The idea of *cause*, on which all reasonings depend, is perhaps gratuitous; at all events, it could not be rigorously proved: \* natural principles appear doubtful when we observe that custom becomes, in many cases, a second nature. Why may we not believe that nature is a second custom? Even the reality of our impressions is obscured by the vividness of the impressions which we have in our dreams. In dreams, we believe in the reality of phantoms. May not waking be but a more continuous dream? And what proof have we that it is waking? The more the reason is employed on these questions, the more it darkens them. Meditation leads from ignorance to ignorance, from ignorance which does not know itself to ignorance which does know itself. This is the point that philosophers attain to. Also, true philosophy is to laugh at philosophy; and if Aristotle and Plato deserve the name of philosophers, it is rather by the practical wisdom of their life than by their metaphysical speculations. Reason alone, then, is an imperfect or a false instrument; and if truth is to enter into us, it is by another door than that of reasoning.

<sup>1</sup> See also on the abuse of this sentiment, I. v. 8.

\* See Appendix, Note D.

3. A third antithesis or contrariety is that which obtains on the subject of happiness. The desire of happiness is essential to us. But this happiness (it is the general complaint) we are so far from attaining, that we know not even where we should seek for it. Reason gives us some light on the subject, but a light that is useless, as we shall see. It tells us that happiness is not a distinct thing from contentment ; that the seat of happiness is in ourselves ; that external objects have no absolute influence over it ; that, on the contrary, what is within us can completely change the character of external objects ; that, not being masters of the external world, we ought to make ourselves masters of the internal world, on which we have a hold ; that then only what is without us will become subject to us, incapable of hurting us, and fitted to serve us. Reason, then, invites us to return into ourselves, to entrench ourselves there ; and happiness has been admirably defined to be *interest in tranquillity*. But all our practice protests against this definition. It is out of ourselves that we go to seek for happiness. Our desires go begging after external objects. We ask felicity from all men and all things. We are so imbued, in practice, with this false idea, that in most languages the word which signifies happiness means properly *success, good luck, good fortune*. We call the man happy who obtains the particular objects of his desires. In acting thus, what is the result ? If we do not succeed in our pursuit, we are positively unhappy. If we succeed, happiness becomes sour in our soul, as in an unclean vessel. Still more unhappy are we if the cup of our external happiness runs over, and if the prodigality of fortune leaves us nothing to desire. Satiety, so prompt to come (for we have soon ex-

hausted all, and our capacity of enjoyment meets fatal limits in our organisation)—this satiety sends us back into ourselves. The soul must suffice for its own happiness ; external objects cannot give it ; and, not finding itself sufficient, it experiences that extremes meet, and that the excess of happiness brings the same result with the excess of misfortune. A horrible situation is that of the man who has devoured all the happiness that external objects can give him, and who has not prepared his soul to give him more. From all this the conclusion is inevitable, that the only pursuit of external things which repays the pain which it costs, is the pursuit of the strictly necessary, which, when obtained, gives us a positive happiness, but a happiness which is material, animal, not the happiness of the soul. It is thus that reflection seems to contradict common notions; but these carry the day against reflection. And, in truth, it is not easy to choose, in this matter, between reflection and common notions; for by following the dictates of reflection, we do not more surely attain happiness. Far from it. If we return into ourselves, what do we find ? Nothing that can satisfy us. Thus we cannot blame those who fly out of themselves. They do not find happiness, it is true ; but they escape from themselves, which is perhaps the most prudent course which a man bound to himself can adopt.<sup>1</sup> This is, according to Pascal, the true secret of the tumultuous agitation of men.

“Nothing is more fitted to enable us to apprehend

<sup>1</sup> “The philosophers tell him in vain (to enter into himself); and those who believe them are the most vacant and the most foolish.” This note of M. Vinet does not appear to be a textual quotation, but rather an abridgment of the thoughts of Pascal (I. iv. 9, 1, and vii. towards the end).

the misery of men than a consideration of the true cause of the perpetual agitation in which they pass their lives.

“The soul is placed in the body, to sojourn there for a short time. It knows that it is only a passage to an eternal voyage, and that it has only the short time that life lasts to prepare for it. The necessities of nature steal away a great part of it. There remains only a very little at its disposal. But that little incommodes it so greatly, and embarrasses it so strangely, that its only care is to get rid of it. It is an intolerable pain to it to be obliged to live with itself, and to think of itself. Thus all its care is to forget itself, and to let this time, so short and so precious, run on without reflection, occupying itself with things which prevent its thinking.

“This is the origin of all the tumultuous occupations of men, and of all that is called diversion or pastime, in which men have, in fact, no object but to let the time pass without their feeling it, or, rather, without feeling themselves, and to avoid, by losing this part of life, the bitterness and internal disgust which would necessarily accompany the attention which they might give to themselves during this time. The soul finds nothing in itself which satisfies it; it sees only what distresses it when it thinks of it. This constrains it to spread outwards, and to seek, in application to external things, to lose the recollection of its real condition. Its joy consists in this forgetfulness; and it is enough to render it miserable to oblige it to see itself, and to be with itself.

“Men are charged, from their childhood, with the care of their honour, their property, and even of the property and the honour of their relatives and friends. They are burdened with the study of languages, of sciences, of exercises, and of arts. They are charged with business; they are given to

understand that they cannot be happy unless they act in such wise, by industry and care, that their fortune and their honour, and even the fortune and honour of their friends, be in good case, and that failure in a single point will render them unhappy. Thus tasks and business are laid upon them, which require of them to toil from day-break. A strange way, you will say, to make them happy ! What better plan could there be to make them unhappy ? Do you ask, what better plan ? Take away from them all these cares ; for then they would see themselves, and think of themselves ; and that they cannot endure. Moreover, after being burdened with so much business, if they have any time of relaxation, they strive to get rid of it by some diversion which occupies them entirely, and delivers them from themselves.

“ Hence it is that, when I have set myself to consider the various agitations of men, the perils and the pains to which they expose themselves, in the court and in the camp, in the pursuit of their ambitious pretensions, whence arise so many quarrels, passions, and dangerous and fatal enterprises, I have often said that all the unhappiness of men comes of their not being able to remain at rest in a chamber. A man who has property enough to live upon, if he could stay at home, would not leave it to go upon the sea, or to the siege of any place ; and if men sought simply only to live, they would have little need for so dangerous occupations.

“ But when I have looked more closely into the matter, I have found that this dislike which men have for repose, and for remaining with themselves, proceeds from a very effective cause, namely, from the natural misfortune of our condition, which is weak and mortal, and so wretched that nothing

can comfort us, unless by preventing our thinking of it, and seeing only ourselves.

“I speak only of those who look upon themselves without any view of religion. For it is a truth, that it is one of the marvels of the Christian religion that it reconciles man with himself by reconciling him with God, that it renders the sight of himself endurable, and that it makes solitude and repose more agreeable to many than bustle and intercourse with men. Moreover, it is not by confining man within himself that it produces all these marvellous effects. It is only by bringing him to God, and sustaining him under the feeling of his miseries by the hope of another life which is to set him wholly free from them.” (I. vii. 1.)

“It is the combat that pleases us, not the victory. We like to see the fights of animals, not the victor glutting himself on the vanquished. What should we wish to see, if not the end of the victory? Yet as soon as that comes, we are disgusted. So it is in play, so in the search after truth. We like to see in disputes the conflict of opinions; but not at all to contemplate the truth when found. In order that we may observe it with pleasure, we must see it arising out of the controversy. In like manner with respect to the passions: there is pleasure in seeing two contrary ones struggle with each other; but when one is mistress, there is nought but brutality. We never seek for things, but for the search after things.” (I. ix. 34.)

4. Man feels in himself passions which ought to obey, and a reason which ought to command. But it is in vain: the war is endless; victory on either side is impossible. Neither can reason subdue the passions, nor can the passions put reason to silence. When we overcome one passion, it

is only by the aid of another, which leads us to suppose that the true limit of the passions would be an affection which should outweigh them all.\* This is the true *reason*, to oppose the lusts of the natural man.

“The internal war of the reason against the passions has led those who have wished for peace to be divided into two sects. The one party have wished to renounce the passions, and become gods; the other, to renounce reason, and become beasts. But neither the one class nor the other have succeeded. Reason still remains to accuse the baseness and injustice of the passions, and to disturb the peace of those who give themselves up to them; and the passions still survive even in those who wish to renounce them.” (II. i. 2.)

Man, then, is full of antitheses and contradictions. And, in short, we must repeat that he is great and miserable;—miserable, since he feels that he is so (and what need is there of other proofs?); great, since he knows that he is miserable. When a beggar regards himself as miserable in comparison with a rich man, that is no sign of greatness; but often a man enriched with all advantages finds himself miserable, and that is a sign of greatness; for his desire, his want, extends into the invisible world. These two opposite attributes, derived from one another, serve mutually as proofs each of the other. The misery of man is demonstrated by his greatness, and his greatness by his misery. In fact, his misery consists in a fall, and his greatness in the consciousness of that fall.

It is impossible, after an examination of all these contradictions, to look with a calm and indifferent eye on the condition of men in this world. In vain would we have recourse to our daily impressions, and reproduce that image

\* See Appendix, Note E.

of man that has been made for us by habit and opinion. This false picture is effaced beyond recovery; indifference disappears, and we cry out with Pascal :

“ Know, then, oh proud one, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, impotent reason; be silent, imbecile nature. Learn that man infinitely surpasses the comprehension of men; and learn from your Master your real condition, of which you are ignorant.

“ For, in a word, if man had never been corrupt, he would enjoy truth and felicity with assurance. And if man had never been but corrupt, he would have no idea either of truth or of blessedness. But, wretches that we are, and more wretched than if there had been no greatness in our condition, we have an idea of happiness, and we cannot attain it; we perceive an image of truth, and we possess nought but a lie; incapable of being absolutely ignorant and of knowing with certainty; so manifest is it that we were once in a degree of perfection from which we are unhappily fallen.

“ What, then, do this eagerness and this impotence cry out to us, but that once man was possessed of true happiness, of which there now remains to him only the impression and the empty form, which he tries in vain to fill with all that surrounds him, by seeking in absent things the aid which he does not find in things present, and which neither these nor those are capable of affording him, because the infinite gulf cannot be filled but by an infinite and unchangeable object.” (II. v. 3.)

This is, in substance, what experience proclaims to me. But what says it more? What do the philosophers teach us on the subject? Have they accounted for these contradictions?

No. They have not even indicated the difficulty ; they have not rendered the darkness visible. The enigma remains quite unsolved.

Being unable to reconcile the two elements of the problem, they have adopted the plan of showing only one of them. All their systems, however various they may be, on the subject of man, are reducible into two principal systems : one which, perceiving in man a principle of greatness, imposes upon him laws in accordance with that greatness ; the other which, struck with the vile element of his nature, opens to him an easy and a shameful career. This is what they have done. Could they do more ? Is it competent to human reason to conclude peace between the discordant principles which we have recognised ? It can only put an end to the conflict by withdrawing one of the combatants.

Pascal has failed to give to this part of his work the development of which it was susceptible. He has not even marked distinctly the place which it should occupy in his work. Some scattered indications are all that the collection of the *Thoughts* affords us on this subject.

“ Among the philosophers, some have undertaken the task to elevate man by disclosing his greatness, and others to humble him by representing his miseries. What is most strange is, that each party employs the reasons of the other to establish its own opinion ; for the misery of man is inferred from his greatness, and his greatness is inferred from his misery. Thus, the one party have established his misery all the better, as they have taken his greatness as the proof of it ; and the other have established the greatness with so much more force, as they have derived it from the misery. All that the one party have been able to say to show the

greatness, has only served as an argument to the other to prove the misery, since the misery is great in proportion to the height whence we are fallen ; and the others conversely. They have thus risen, the one above the other, by an unending circle ; it being certain that, in proportion as men are more enlightened, they discover in man more and more of misery and of greatness." (II. i. 5.)

" Have they found the remedy for our evils ? Does it cure the presumption of man, to liken him to God ? And those who have equalled us to the beasts, and who have given us the pleasures of the earth as our whole good, have they brought the remedy to our lusts ? Lift up your eyes towards God, say the one party ; behold Him whom you are like, and who has made you to adore Him ; you can make yourselves like unto Him. Wisdom will make you equal to Him, if you will follow it. And the others say : Cast down your eyes to the earth, caitiff worm that you are, and look upon the brutes of which you are the fellow.

" What, then, shall become of man ? Shall he be equal to God or to the brutes ? What a frightful distance ? What shall we be ?

. . . " They know neither what is your real good, nor what is your real condition. How should they have given remedies for your evils, when they did not even know them ? Your chief maladies are pride, which separates you from God, and lust, which binds you to the earth ; and they have done nought else than encourage at least one of these evils. If they have set God before you, it has only been to foster your pride. They have made you think that you resemble Him in your nature. And those who have seen the vanity of this pretension have thrown you upon the other precipice,

by giving you to understand that your nature is like that of the brutes, and have led you to seek your good in those lusts which are common to the animals. This is not the way to teach you of your wrongs. Expect, then, neither truth nor consolation from men.”<sup>1</sup> (II. v. 1.)

If man forget that he has two elements in his actual nature, and if, taking account only of one, he put his trust in one or other of these two sects of philosophers, how will he be deceived or degraded!—deceived, if he believe in greatness without misery; degraded, if he be persuaded of misery without greatness. But if these two elements strike him at once, he will cease to regard the philosophers for what concerns the knowledge and conduct of man, and will understand, with Pascal, that the greatest merit of philosophy is to “lead us insensibly to theology,\* into which it is difficult not to enter whatever be the truth we handle, since it is the centre of all truths” (I. xi. 4).

Let any one conceive, as every one can, the condition of a man who has sought, with his own reason and that of the philosophers, the key of these great enigmas. Thus Pascal describes his anguish:—

“When I see the blindness and the misery of man, and those astonishing contradictions which are exhibited in his nature, and when I see the whole universe dumb, and man without light, left to himself, and, as it were, strayed into this corner of the universe, without knowing who has placed him there, what he is sent to do, or what is to become of him when he dies, I am terrified like a man who might be

<sup>1</sup> See also II. v. 10, and the parallel between Epictetus and Montaigne (II. xi.).

\* See Appendix, Note F.

carried while asleep into a desert and horrible island, and who might awake without knowing where he is, and without having any means of escaping from the island. And thereupon I wonder how people do not fall into despair of such a miserable condition. I see other persons around me of like nature ; I ask of them if they be better informed than I am, and they tell me that they are not ; and thereupon these miserable wanderers, having looked around them and seen some pleasant objects, devote themselves to them, and cling to them. For my part I cannot stay here, nor rest in the society of those persons like myself, miserable as myself, powerless as myself. I see that they would not help me to die. I shall die alone. I must therefore act as if I were alone. But if I were alone, I should not build houses, I should not embarrass myself with tumultuous occupations, I should not seek the esteem of any person, I should only strive to discover the truth." (I. vii. 1.)

Observe, I pray you, that the anguish of this man is not the anguish of curiosity ; the greatest interests are involved in the solution of these questions. The great derangement of his being is not a problem merely ; it might be a danger. If the feeling of his baseness makes him sadly cast down his eyes to the earth, the invincible feeling of his greatness makes him raise them to heaven : the continuance of his being is the object of his ardent desire, and the subject of his liveliest fears ; but the darkness which envelopes his nature extends equally over his future. Shall he live as if his question of the future were resolved, caring little whether it is to be resolved to his profit or his loss ? Shall he forget the danger, in hope that the danger will forget him ? Such is not the advice of Pascal. Hear how he

expresses himself in those immortal pages, where eloquence, stripped of every foreign ornament, is beautiful only with the sublimity of candour.

“The immortality of the soul is a thing which concerns us so mightily, and which touches us so deeply, that we must have lost all feeling ere we can be indifferent as to the knowledge of it. All our actions and all our thoughts must take so different courses, according as we have or have not eternal good to hope for, that it is impossible to take a single step with sense and judgment, except by directing it with reference to this point, which should be our first object.

“Thus, our first interest, and our first duty, is to get enlightenment on this subject, on which all our conduct depends. And therefore it is, that among those who are not persuaded of it, I make an extreme distinction betwixt those who labour with all their might to inform themselves, and those who live without putting themselves to trouble, or thinking of the matter.

“I can only have compassion for those who sincerely lament this doubt, and regard it as the last of misfortunes, and who, sparing no pains to be delivered from it, make this inquiry their chief and most serious occupation. But for those who pass their lives without thinking of this latter end of life, and who, for no other reason than that they find not in themselves light sufficient to produce conviction, neglect to seek it elsewhere, and to examine to the bottom whether this opinion be one of those which the people receive by a credulous simplicity, or one of those which, though obscure in themselves, have yet a very solid foundation,—upon them I look in a very different way. This negligence in a matter which concerns themselves, their eternity, their

all, rather enrages than softens me ; it astonishes and confounds me ; to me it seems monstrous. I say not this through the pious zeal of a spiritual devotion. I maintain, on the contrary, that self-love, human interest, the simplest light of reason, ought to inspire these sentiments. For this purpose, we need only see what is seen by persons the least enlightened.

“ The soul needs not be very exalted in order to comprehend that here there is no true and solid satisfaction ; that all our pleasures are but vanity ; that our evils are infinite ; and that at last death, which threatens us at every instant, must in a few years, and may in a few days, land us in an eternal state of happiness, or of misery, or of annihilation. Between us and heaven, or hell, or nothingness, there is but life, which is the most fragile thing in the world ; and heaven being certainly not for those who doubt if their soul is immortal, they have only to expect hell or annihilation.

“ There is nothing more real than this, or more terrible. Let us act the brave as we will, behold the end that awaits the fairest life in the world.

“ It is in vain that they turn their thoughts away from that eternity which awaits them, as if they could nullify it by not thinking of it. It subsists in spite of them ; it approaches ; and death, which is to open it, shall infallibly land them, ere long, in the necessity of being eternally annihilated, or eternally miserable.

“ Behold a doubt of terrible consequence ! It is even now assuredly a very great evil to be in this doubt ; but it is at least an indispensable duty to inquire when one is in it. Thus, he who doubts and does not inquire, is at once very culpable and very unhappy. But if, withal, he is tranquil

and satisfied ; if he profess it, and even make a boast of it ; and if this be the very subject of which he makes his joy and his pride, I have no words to describe so extravagant a creature.

“ Whence can these sentiments come ? What matter of rejoicing can any one find in the expectation of miseries without remedy ? What subject of boasting in finding himself in impenetrable darkness ? What comfort in having no expectation of a comforter ?

“ This repose in this ignorance is a monstrous thing, and a thing whose extravagance and stupidity must be made apparent to those who pass their lives in it, by representing to them what passes in themselves, so as to confound them by the sight of their folly ; for behold how men reason when they choose to live in this ignorance of what they are, and without seeking for enlightenment.

“ I know not who has sent me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I myself am. I am in terrible ignorance of everything. I know not what my body is, nor my senses, nor my soul : and even that part of me which thinks what I say, and which reflects on all things and on itself, knows no more of itself than of aught else. I see those frightful spaces of the universe which enclose me ; and I find myself bound to a corner of this vast extent, without knowing why I am placed here rather than elsewhere, or why the small portion of time which is given me to live in, is assigned to me at this point rather than at any other of the whole eternity which has gone before, or of that which is to come after. I see only infinities on all sides of me, which swallow me up as if I were an atom, and as a shadow which remains for an instant and never re-

turns. All that I know is, that I must soon die ; but what I am most ignorant of, is that very death which I cannot escape.

“ As I know not whence I come, so I know not whither I go. I only know that, on quitting this world, I fall for ever either into annihilation, or into the hands of an angry God, without knowing which of these conditions is to be my lot for ever.

“ Behold my condition, full of misery, of weakness, of darkness ! And from all this I conclude that I am to pass all the days of my life without caring what is to befall me ; and that I have only to follow my inclinations without reflection and without disquietude, doing all that would lead me into eternal misery, on the supposition that what is told me were true. Perhaps I might find some enlightenment in my doubts, but I will not take the trouble, nor make a step to seek it ; and, treating with contempt those who burden themselves with this care, I will go, without foresight and without fear, to try so great an issue, and suffer myself luxuriously to be led to death in uncertainty of the eternity of my future condition.

“ In truth, it is to the glory of religion to have so unreasonable men as its enemies ; their opposition is so little dangerous to it, that it serves, on the contrary, to establish the principal truths which it teaches us. For the Christian faith goes mainly to establish these two things,—the corruption of our nature, and redemption by Jesus Christ. But if these men do not serve to show the truth of the redemption by the holiness of their lives, at least they serve admirably to show the corruption of nature by sentiments so unnatural.” (II. ii.)

It is then settled : he will investigate whether God, the

fountain of all truth, the key of all mysteries, be not anywhere revealed. To seek Him with the reason alone, holds out no hope of success; the experience which he has had respecting the knowledge of man, has rendered him distrustful as to the means of knowing God.

“ I look round on all sides, and everywhere I see nought but darkness. Nature offers me nothing but what is matter for doubt and disquietude. If I saw no indications of a Divinity, I should make up my mind to disbelieve it. If I saw everywhere the marks of a Creator, I should rest peacefully in the faith. But seeing too much to admit of denial, and too little for conviction, I can only lament, and a hundred times desire, that if there be a God who sustains nature, she would unequivocally manifest Him; and that if the indications which she gives of Him are fallacious, she would suppress them altogether; that she would say all or say nothing, that I might see what course to adopt. Whereas, in my actual condition, ignorant at once of what I am and of what I ought to do, I know neither my condition nor my duty. My heart is wholly set upon knowing where is the true good, that I might follow it. Nothing could be too costly for this.” (II. vii. 1.)

Oh, the thick darkness of the human reason, or rather, the strange blindness of the human soul! It finds not in nature that God whose presence sparkles in every ray of the morning, shines forth in every star of the firmament, murmurs in every wave of the ocean, breathes in every whisper of the air, exhales in the perfume of every flower. Pascal (listen to his words) does not feel himself “ able to find in nature the means of convincing hardened atheists” (II. iii. 2); but if he had attained to the point of

convincing them, he would have made little advance if he had not been able to conduct them farther. Let us suppose the man whose thoughts and successive torments we are, under the guidance of Pascal, describing, to have, in fact, discovered God, to have recognised God by reason. "Though a man (says Pascal) were persuaded that the proportions of numbers are immaterial truths, eternal and dependent on a first truth in which they subsist, and which is called *God*,"\* I should not regard him as having made much progress towards his salvation" (II. iii. 2).

It is necessary, then, that this man know not merely that God is, but what He is; not what He is in Himself, but what in His relation to man. And as reason and philosophy are incapable of teaching him this; as, on the contrary, the obscurity which covers the condition of man, covers also, by necessary consequence, the purposes of God, these purposes, if they have been revealed, can only have been revealed in an extraordinary manner, by a supernatural way. This calls the attention of this man to the different religions which cover the surface of the earth, all of which profess to rest upon a revelation, to contain a revelation.

He therefore goes on to pass the several religions under review. But, supposing that one of them has been given by God, how shall he recognise it? Or, more generally, what are the conditions which it must fulfil?

Here an idea at once presents itself. A positive religion pretends to supplement or take the place of reason, and even to silence it. But, as it is reason that must conduct this examination, some explanations are necessary in order to prevent a vexatious and interminable conflict.

\* See Appendix, Note G.

And, first, it must be expected that the true religion shall contain things above reason. Why do we search among positive religions at all, but because we have discovered the inability of reason to make a religion of itself? We seek, therefore, for something beyond reason. Our procedure implies this avowal. We must either prove that all revealed religion is, by its very nature, an impossibility, or acknowledge that every revealed religion must contain mysteries. A religion which should not contain them would not be revealed.

Nevertheless, with what instrument do we seek for this religion? With our reason. By our reason we must recognise it. God must then have surrounded His revelation (if He has made one) with proofs which should be accessible to our reason. Further, if the truths which He reveals to us be beyond our reason, they must not contradict it. These are two conditions which we must lay down, or rather, that we cannot but lay down: a revelation whose authenticity shall be capable of proof according to the ordinary means of proof;—a revelation whose matter shall contain nothing contrary to reason. But this last point requires to be defined.

Nothing is more usual than for us to declare, respecting anything which astonishes our reason, anything that is new to it, that it is contrary to reason. This abuse, so blameable in judgments which relate to finite things, is much more so in those which refer to the province of religion. In order to guard against it, two essential points must be attended to. 1st, The mind, by itself alone, is not a competent judge in matters of the heart. 2d, When we say that the reason must be called on to distinguish the true religion, we do not

mean by *reason* the aggregate of our acquired notions, but the elementary principles, essential to the organisation of the human mind, and the basis of all its operations, which prove all things, and which nothing proves. And to attain surely the highest point of evidence and universality, to arrive at an immovable foundation, we say that what is contrary to reason is *contradiction*, the union in one proposition of the affirmation and the negation. All that lies within this limit may be admitted, provided the authenticity of the revelation is proved otherwise.

Pascal has not fully developed these ideas. We find them in embryo in the following passages :—“ If we submit all to reason, our religion will contain nothing mysterious or supernatural. If we shock the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous” (II. vi. 2). “ Faith tells us much that the senses do not tell us, but never the contrary of what they tell us. It is above them, but not opposed to them” (II. vi. 4).

He has dwelt more upon the real value and the legitimacy of the faith of those who believe without having examined the external proofs. “ The heart has its reasons, which the reason knows not” (II. xvii. 5). This truth he expands in the two following paragraphs :—

“ Those who believe without having examined the proofs of religion, believe because they have a holy disposition within them, and what they hear of our religion accords with that disposition. They *feel* that a God has made them. They wish to love only Him, to hate only themselves. They feel that they have not power to do this; that they cannot go to God; and that, unless God come to them, they can have no communion with Him. And they hear our re-

ligion tell them that God alone should be loved, and themselves alone hated; but that we being wholly corrupt, and incapable of God, God has been made man in order to unite Himself to us. No more is needful to convince men who have this disposition in their hearts, and this knowledge of their duty and their incapacity." (II. vi. 7.)

"Those whom we see to be Christians without knowledge of prophecies and proofs, do not fail to judge of it as well as those who have this knowledge. They judge of it by the heart, as others by the mind. It is God Himself that inclines them to believe; and thus they are very effectually persuaded.

"I admit that one of those Christians who believe without proofs will not perhaps have the means of refuting an infidel who shall say as much of himself. But those who know the proofs of religion will prove without difficulty that this believer is truly inspired of God, though he be not able to prove it himself." (II. vi. 8.)

But if, after having followed these rules, we still see a crowd of men not coming to the same conclusion with ourselves, I see nought in this that ought to discompose us. For in most cases we shall see that they have not inquired; or we shall see that in the inquiry they have arbitrarily put the heart in the place of the mind, or the mind in the place of the heart. Lastly, conviction and repose of mind are founded on the essential goodness of the proofs which we have had submitted to us, and not upon the reception which they receive at the hands of our fellows. No one believes on the ground of the faith of others; or, if so, it is with a dead faith.

It is not enough for the author to have given these

general directions as to the use of the instrument which we are inevitably obliged to apply to this investigation. Himself making use of this instrument, he investigates, with its aid, what are the characteristics which must not be wanting to the true religion, or the marks by which it will be recognised at once by him who knows of what contradictions man is composed.

At the outset of the investigation whether, among the several religions of the world, there be one which God has given, and in which consequently I may find the end of my doubts and my anxieties, I cannot conceal from myself that by the very fact of the investigation I acknowledge the insufficiency of my reason ; for I undertake this investigation only because my reason has not furnished me with the solution which I asked of it. Still this renunciation is not absolute ; and like as a functionary deprived of his office still remains in his place till the arrival of his successor, so my reason retains its functions until it be superseded. Yea more ; my reason has the duty imposed on it of finding and nominating its successor. In fact, the revelation which I seek, and which is to supplement my natural faculties, I can seek only by means of my natural faculties. I can well expect,—I ought to expect,—that its matter shall transcend these faculties, and that it shall explain mysteries by mysteries ; for, were it not so, the human race would already have found in its own reason the solution which it desires ; but what I may also, and ought to expect, is that the means of verifying the authenticity of this revelation shall not be above the power of the human reason. What I have a right to demand, if God has spoken, is that I shall be able to ascertain that He has spoken. I may presume that it shall

be possible for human reason to attain a degree of certainty on this point equal to that which it can attain respecting other facts;—the same certainty that belongs to the best established historical facts, the same certainty on which a man stakes his life, the same that enables a judge to pronounce with full tranquillity of soul the fate of a criminal,—a certainty, in short, which, without having the instantaneousness of the evidence, leaves, after a conscientious examination, no trouble, no cloud on the mind. I cannot equitably demand more ; but I cannot be satisfied with less.

“ There are two ways (says Pascal) of proving the truths of our religion ; the one by the force of reason, the other by the authority of Him who speaks. We do not make use of the latter, but of the former. We do not say, You must believe this, for the Scripture which says it is divine ; but we say, You must believe it for such and such reasons, which are but weak arguments, the reason being wholly flexible.”  
(II. xvii. 8.)

I am not called to rest my conviction immediately on the contents of this revelation : still, if, on perusing these contents, I found in it things which were contrary to my reason, nothing could oblige me to accept it ; for, so far as I am concerned, things contrary to my reason are necessarily things contrary to reason. The reason of each person is, *for him*, reason in its general and absolute sense. But I am bound to make sure that I am not putting my prejudices in place of reason ; I must carefully discard all that is not primitive reason, but acquired notion ; I must go back to the original elements of reason, to its foundations, to what pertains to me not as an individual but as a man,—in a word, to the fundamental data on which I hang my reason-

ings on every kind of subject, and, if I may so express myself, to my abstract reason.

There is a natural criticism respecting whose principles all men of good sense agree without difficulty. These rules are few in number, and within reach of all men, and truly popular. These rules, I admit, applied without attention, or with prejudice, do not seem always to give the result which was expected from their employment; but that is the fault of the workman, and not of the tool; and reason fairly throws back upon the heart the reproaches which one might be tempted to cast upon it.

Here a question occurs which is often put. Has the reason shared the condition of the other faculties, which our fall has so grievously injured? Is the reason corrupted? Meditately, yes; immediately, no: at least that is my belief. Our reason is the reporter of our sensations: if our sensations make a false deposition, our reason will make a false judgment. And this is what happens through the obscuration of our moral sense and the tumult of our passions; the judge is uncorrupted, but he is misinformed. And observe that in cases in which the passions do not interfere, in which our interests are not concerned, provided the matter is in other respects within our competence, we judge aright; and in a great variety of individuals, including an almost equal variety of degrees of intelligence, the reason maintains a striking character of identity on essential points. Let us illustrate the matter by an example, which, for the present, we shall present as purely supposititious. Let us imagine an audience composed of individuals of every degree of culture, but sound in mind and sufficiently attentive, and let us propose to them the following case:

Twelve men present themselves before a people, and say to them, We have a friend, who was dead, and who is risen. A great rumour is spread abroad. The resurrection of a man is a fact without example, a fact which stands out in an astounding way from the accustomed order of things. The first impulse is to deny it. Still the fact in itself is not such that we could boldly declare it to be impossible : for it does not involve in it any contradiction ; it does not contain at once affirmation and negation ; and this is sufficient. In order to believe it possible, it is only necessary to believe in God. This removes all contradiction. Those, therefore, who believe in God, will admit the possibility of the fact. Still it remains exceedingly improbable.

The man who is said to have risen does not appear. On the question of his resurrection we have only the testimony of twelve men. It is true that, in many cases, testimony may afford ground for complete certainty ; but on two conditions ; viz., that the witnesses could not have been deceived, and that they could not have intended to deceive others. These two questions, therefore, must be examined in the case before us. If one or both of these questions be answered in the affirmative, the fact remains uncertain. If, on the other hand, mistake and deception are both out of the question, the fact must be accepted as if we had seen it.

The first question is, Could they be deceived ? Generally speaking, we may be mistaken as to a person's identity. A thousand instances prove this. If, then, they saw this risen one only for a moment, if he did not speak, if their previous knowledge of him was but slight, the mistake is conceivable. But this is not the case in the instance before us.

Before his death they lived on familiar terms with him, they conversed with him for whole days, they followed him like his shadow.. They knew the minutest particulars of his gait, his gestures, his voice. No personal acquaintance was ever more intimate. They saw him die, they saw him buried, they saw the seal put on the sepulchre ; they wept over his tomb ; they had no expectation of his re-appearance ; no anticipation of this kind has usurped, or even approached, their minds. It is while they are mourning his death that the dead one appears to them full of life. In the pre-occupation of their grief, they do not all at once recognise him. Such a thought is too far from their minds. One of them, refusing to believe his eyes, has recourse to his hands, which he thrusts into the wounds of the crucified one. Thenceforth the new-born from the tomb converses, lives with them and with other friends ; he resumes with them all the habits of his previous life, day and night he is with them ;\* he takes up the broken thread of his previous discourses ; he shows clearly the identity of his person in the identity of his soul ; it is not till after forty days passed in this constant intercourse, that he leaves them a second time, and for ever.

I appeal to all my hearers ;—Could these twelve men be mistaken ? No. But they may have imposed upon us. Here two principles claim recognition.

1st, A man does not deceive without interest ; least of all, contrary to his own interest. 2d, An impostor is a vile character.

If these two principles are true, the witnesses of whom we speak cannot be impostors. If they were impostors, these two principles are false ; and as there are not in the

\* See Appendix, Note H.

world any principles more evident, it would follow that we cannot attain the least certainty on any subject.

In fact (to suppose the case for a moment), behold impostors who deceive not only without any interest in deception, but in opposition to their most evident interest. There is neither glory nor profit in taking part with this man. This they had themselves perceived so distinctly, that they had denied Him when He was a prisoner, had forsaken Him on the cross, had sorrowfully given up His cause as too dangerous. We cannot comprehend how their zeal and enthusiasm, so completely extinguished in the shades of His death, could have been suddenly rekindled, if nothing had occurred in the interval. What, then, has occurred? Reflection? But reflections increase fear: reflections would have led them back to the ignominious end of their Master, to the lamentable issue of His labours, yea, to the conviction of His impotence; for all His power has gone down into the grave; and as for theirs, which they derived solely from His words and His looks, the spring of it is dried up for ever. Who, then, inspires these deserters of yesterday, these weak friends, these timid hearts, with that devotedness full of jubilance, with that triumphant ardour? Is it the present? Is it the future? The present, full of contempt and dangers? The future? Peter, Paul, and James set about turning their nation and the world upside down with an imposture! Alas! their immediate prospect is a prison, and a prison without glory! And if their Master is not risen, what have they to say? What do they intend? To regenerate the world! To regenerate it by an imposture! To set out from an imposture to teach the human race truth, candour, devotedness! Laden with the burden of an infamous lie,

they go to teach the world the most refined and the purest morality!—morality so pure, that the natural heart of man cannot contemplate it without trembling! morality so pure, that it will be a new charge against them, and the heaviest of all! Yea more; they shall observe it, this morality; they shall live in the world as if they lived not in it; they shall refuse for themselves every kind of recompense, even glory; they shall refuse for themselves the advantages which the appearance of a new doctrine might procure for them among the people. Far from relaxing the authority of the laws, they go to sanction a political power which seems to be condemned by its abuses; far from winning the slaves to their side, they rivet—I venture to say it—their chains. They only relieve consciences; they conspire not, save against the prince of darkness. All this they do, misconceived, persecuted even by those whose authority they consecrate and confirm. In a word, their conduct, judged with reference to their interests, is so absurd, that it cannot be explained but on the supposition of the most elevated and the purest sentiment that has ever actuated human creatures; a sentiment whose continuance and steadiness put its purity beyond all doubt. And these models of a virtue previously unexampled are but vile impostors!

Let us add a concluding observation. Several persons may combine for a falsehood. But let these persons live a long life, in widely distant places, in circumstances equally diverse, and sometimes in collision with one another, without, in any one instance, any one of these persons retracting the falsehood to which he is a party, without either weariness of the most painful task, or threatenings, or imminent death,

making them vary on this point,—this is without example, this is morally impossible; or else we must admit that moral certainty, which is one of the pivots on which human life turns, is a word void of meaning.\*

I venture to assert that this second supposition will appear to all men as inadmissible as the former; and I believe that the question, sincerely and maturely examined, calls for this answer, *What the apostles said is the truth.*

But if their Master is really risen, their Master is God. If He is God, He could do for them Divine things, and He must have done them. If He has sent them into the world for the accomplishment of a work, He has given them the means of accomplishing it. If they have a message to carry, it is a Divine message. This alone constrains men to accord a religious confidence to the teaching of these witnesses. But there is another motive. Their Master promised them that His Spirit should lead them into all truth; they have recorded this promise; and, true upon all else, they must be true on this point. I acknowledge them, therefore, in their teachings, as the faithful and authorised organs of their Master; and without discussing the manner of the inspiration which they receive from Him, without determining the part left to individuality and to humanity, I acknowledge in their thoughts the thoughts of Christ Himself, and I submit my darkness to the light which they borrow from heaven. Thus it is that from the fact of the resurrection, duly established, is deduced the authority of the Scriptures of the New Testament; and that by a series of very simple deductions, which do not yield in respect of closeness and of clearness to any one of those on which our firmest convic-

\* See Appendix, Note I.

tions rest, and on which we suspend, with the greatest confidence, the determinations of our will.

We have thought that a single example, presented in some detail, would render more palpable than any reasoning the truth which we wished to establish, viz., that the human reason is competent to establish the authenticity of a revelation ; and that, if the task which is laid upon it in this matter appear to be beyond its strength, it is not it that is to be blamed.

Pascal does not ascribe to the proofs of religion the evidence of mathematical truths. “The prophecies, the miracles even, and the other proofs of our religion, are not of such a kind that we can say that they are geometrically convincing.” (II. xvii. 20).

Pascal, while assigning to reason the right and the capacity which we have recognised as belonging to it, does not pretend that all should receive religion by the way of reasoning. What, then, is the other way which he admits? Think you that it is tradition? No. Tradition is only a fact favourable to religion ; a circumstance which brings it under the eyes of men, and calls for examination. Men are not believers through tradition ; but tradition may lead them to become believers, whether they examine religion by means of reason, or whether they sound or taste it by the heart. This second way, far from his considering inferior to the former, he regards as the better of the two. This he expresses in several places with so much force, that we can see that it was one of his favourite thoughts.\* (See II. vi. 7, 8.) In his estimation, those who believe with the heart, believe as well as those who are convinced by the reason. It would

\* See Appendix, Note J.

even appear that they believe better. A precious liquor may be indicated by the form and the label of the vessel which contains it ; and we may attend only to these external marks ; but he who, without examining these marks, has tasted it, and proved the effects which it is intended to produce, doubtless knows all about it that needs be known. The true religion must be capable of proving itself to the heart ; and it is to this that every believer ought to come. Until he has assayed this kind of proof, he is not a believer in the sense which religion demands. It may then be admitted as a principle, that the true religion has an evidence for the heart which is above all assurance acquired otherwise. Only it is a kind of conviction, which, not having been obtained by reasoning, cannot be communicated by reasoning. He who believes in this way can demand nothing of the infidel ; but he may demand of him whom reason has made a believer, that he recognise and respect the legitimacy of the belief acquired through the heart.

“Those to whom God has given religion by feeling of the heart are blessed and well persuaded. But for those who have it not, we cannot procure it but by reasoning, waiting till God Himself impress it upon their hearts ; without which faith is useless for salvation.” (II. xvii. 17.)

These, then, are the principles according to which Pascal is to proceed to the examination of the different religions, and to the search for the true one. But, of course, you do not suppose that he will bestow upon all indiscriminately the same degree of attention. Before examining a religion with respect to the authenticity of its documents, he will cast a glance over its contents. If it do not promise, or if, having promised, it do not afford, the solution of the great problems

which have induced him to undertake this examination ; if it do not even appear to have been aware of the chief of these difficulties, we can, without further investigation, boldly pronounce that it is not Divine ; for what is useless cannot be Divine, and what is Divine cannot be useless. If God has spoken, it cannot be in vain ; if He has spoken, it is in order to clear away our doubts and end our torments ; if He has spoken, it is to enable us to find in Him what we could not find in ourselves. A religion which does not answer the pressing questions of human nature, is condemned already.

Not that we supposed that any religion is wholly destitute of truth. We have already said, at the commencement of this course, that it is not in the power of man to create a pure error. Every religion is true in some point ;—true, if not as a Divine thought, at least as a human thought. And in this light viewed, every religion is a revelation. But that alone is the true religion, which, on the one hand, has put all the questions, and on the other, has answered them all.

If, in the course of my inquiries, I meet with a religion which has known all my agonies and has expressed them all, heard all my cries and repeated them all, I shall be powerfully attracted, but not yet convinced. If it offer a solution of all the problems of my nature, I cannot know that this solution is true but in two ways : either by the testimony of my heart, by experience,—a convincing proof, but incommunicable ; or by a succession of researches which prove to me the Divine origin of the documents in which the solution is presented.

Pascal has enumerated, in the fourth article of his Second Part, those marks of the true religion, or, more properly, those marks, the want of which condemns *prima facie* every

religion which does not contain them. But he does not pass them in review till he comes to examine directly the Christian religion. We shall follow the same course, and shall not indicate them till, with him, we arrive at the same point.

These rules being laid down, Pascal was called on to treat of the principal religious systems, whose ruins are strewn along the path of ages, or which are still spread over the face of the earth. Here, then, is a new and a deep gap in the work of our author. Some passages, scattered here and there among fragments relating to other matters, indicate rather than fill the void. If Pascal had treated this part of his subject, perhaps his philosophical mind would easily have reduced the several religions to some elementary ideas : perhaps he would have educed from each of them that portion of truth, of which no one is absolutely destitute ; perhaps, alongside of the necessity that they manifest of a directory for life, he would have remarked a contemplative tendency which converts some of these religions into systems of philosophy or poetical allegories. Pascal has confined himself to remarking (II. iv. 3) that, among these religions, some, dwelling only upon the external, are not suited for intelligent men ; and that others, being purely intellectual, would be more appropriate to the intelligent, but would not serve the people ; and elsewhere (II. vii. 1, § 3), that the religions of the world have neither morality which can please him, nor proofs which can convince him. This is nearly all that is contained, on the subject of religions, in the work under analysis. We feel that these few words presuppose, perhaps sum up the discussion, but they cannot supersede it.

Be this as it may, the author supposes himself surveying the several religions of the earth, rejecting them one after

another, until he is arrested in this rapid review by the religion of the Jews, or rather by the book of that religion. The peculiar characteristics of this book attract and fix his attention. The indication of these characteristics we must seek in Pascal's book itself. Let us only indicate that one with which the author is most struck. Humanity is represented in this book as born glorious; but its fall follows close upon its glory. The traces of its ancient glory, and the burning furrow of the thunderbolt which has laid it low, are visible in all the race. The contrasts in the nature of man are explained by this sad history. His fall and his misery are continually manifested in this book by the promises that are made on the part of God to raise him from this fall, and to deliver him from this misery. All, in the light of this revelation, radiates backward towards a fall, and forward towards a restoration. It is from this datum that the old economy sets out, it is to this end that it everywhere points. These promises, constantly repeated, and becoming more and more distinct, lead me on step by step towards another book, where their accomplishment is to be found. There is found developed a system (for as yet I call it only a system), in which is at length accomplished the reconciliation, the fusion of the discordant elements which afflicted me in nature and the human destinies. Let us here quote some of our author's Thoughts:—

“A religion cannot be true if it do not know our nature; for the true nature of man, his true good—the true virtue and the true religion—are things of which the knowledge is inseparable. It must know the greatness and the baseness of man, and the reason of both. What religion beside the Christian knows all these things?” (II. iv. 2.)

“ The true religion must be distinguished by its requiring of us to love God. This is right; and yet none but ours has ordained it. It must also take cognizance of the concupiscence of man, and his inability of himself to attain to virtue. It must bring remedies for this evil, of which the chief is prayer. Our religion has done all this, and none other has ever asked of God power to love and follow Him.”  
(II. iv. 1.)

“ The other religions, as the Pagan, are more popular, for they consist wholly of externals; but they are not for intelligent men. A religion purely intellectual would be better suited to intelligent men; but it would not serve for the people. The Christian religion alone is suited for all, being composed of the external and the internal. It elevates the people to the internal, and brings down the proud to the external; and it is not perfect without both; for the people must understand the spirit from the letter, and the intelligent must submit their spirit to the letter, by practising what is external.” (II. iv. 3.)

“ We are hateful; reason convinces us of this. But no other religion than the Christian proposes to us to hate ourselves. No other religion, therefore, can be received by those who know that they are worthy only of hatred. No religion except the Christian knows that man is at once the most excellent creature and the most miserable. Some, which know the reality of his excellence, have treated as cowardice and ingratitude the low sentiments which men naturally have of themselves; and others, knowing how real is this baseness, have treated with haughty ridicule those feelings of greatness which are also natural to man. No religion except ours has taught that man is born in sin; no sect of

philosophers has said it; therefore no one has said the truth." (II. iv. 4.)

"The philosophers did not prescribe sentiments suited to the two conditions. They inspired emotions of pure greatness, and that is not the condition of man. Or they inspired emotions of pure baseness, and that is as little the condition of man. There is need of emotions of baseness—not a baseness of nature, but of penitence; not to remain in that condition, but to rise to greatness. There is need of emotions of greatness; but of a greatness which comes from grace, and not from merit, and after having passed through a state of abasement." (II. v. 10.)

"No one is so happy as a true Christian, nor so reasonable, nor so virtuous, nor so amiable. With how little pride does a Christian believe himself united to God! With how little abjectness does he equal himself to the worms of the dust! Who, then, can refuse to these heavenly lights belief and adoration? For is it not clearer than the day that we feel in ourselves characters of excellence that cannot be effaced? And is it not also true that we experience every hour the effects of our deplorable condition? What, then, does this chaos and this monstrous confusion proclaim to us, but the reality of those two conditions, with a voice so powerful that it is impossible to resist it?" (II. v. 11.)

The author does not pretend to give to these considerations more authority than rightfully belongs to very strong presumptions. Perhaps he has taken lower ground than sound philosophy would have entitled him to occupy. Perhaps the only religion that has given a complete and perfectly connected system respecting the condition of man, is *necessarily* the true religion. Perhaps the observation that

the circle which cannot be completed by all the systems, is definitively completed by the doctrine of the cross, and by this doctrine alone, ought to be sufficient to close also the discussion. Perhaps the study of the moral effects of the application of this doctrine to the human heart ought to lead our reason to adopt it. Perhaps the view of the harmony re-established in a soul—I say in one only—by the doctrine of redemption, is the proof that Christianity is the remedy devised of God to put an end to our internal discordances. Perhaps, in a word, in these observations dwells a sufficient demonstration, a complete apology. But Pascal does not consider the demonstration as even commenced which he has in view, because that demonstration is calculated for the requirements of pure reason. He only believes that what he has said is fitted to dispose his hearers to listen with good-will, and even with a lively interest, to what he has still to say. He believes even that, having reached this point, they ought to desire that the Christian religion, examined as a historical fact, may be found to be as true as it is beautiful.\*

Here, then, and only here, begins, with Pascal, what with other writers claims exclusively the title of *Apology*. It is no part of our plan to analyse this part. It scarcely admits of extracts. We shall only say, that in the sketch which he has given of the examination of the historical proofs of Christianity, there is abundance of original ideas and of luminous views. Unfortunately the work is far from being complete. We may judge of what it was intended to embrace from the following summing up, which is the author's own.

\* See Appendix, Note K.

“It is impossible to look at all the proofs of the Christian religion collected together, without feeling their force, which no reasonable man can resist.

“Let any one think of its establishment ; that a religion so contrary to nature should have been established of itself, so peacefully, without any force or constraint, and yet so powerfully that no tortures could deter the martyrs from confessing it ; and that all this should have been done, not only without the aid of any prince, but in spite of all the princes of the earth, who opposed it.

“Let any one consider the holiness, the loftiness, and the humility of a Christian soul. The heathen philosophers sometimes raised themselves above the rest of mankind by a better regulated manner of living, and by sentiments which had some conformity with those of Christianity. But they never recognised as a virtue what the Christians call humility, and they would even have regarded it as incompatible with other virtues of which they boasted. It is only the Christian religion that has known how to join together things that till then had appeared so opposite, and has taught men that, so far from humility being incompatible with the other virtues, without it all the other virtues are but vices and defects.

“Let any one consider the marvels of the Holy Scripture, which are infinite, the grandeur and the superhuman sublimity of the things which it contains, and the admirable simplicity of its style, which has no affectation, no pretension, and which bears a stamp of truth which cannot be gainsaid.

“Let any one consider the character of Jesus Christ in particular. Whatever sentiment we may have of Him, it

cannot be doubted that He had a very great and a very lofty mind, of which He gave indications from His childhood in the presence of the doctors of the law. And yet, instead of applying Himself to the cultivation of His talents by study and by associating with the learned, He passes thirty years of His life in manual labour, and in entire seclusion from the world ; and during the three years of His preaching, He calls to His company and chooses for His apostles men without knowledge, without study, without reputation ; and He draws upon Himself the enmity of those who were reputed the most learned and the wisest men of their time. A strange procedure for a man whose design is to establish a new religion !

“ Let any one consider attentively those apostles chosen by Jesus Christ, those illiterate men, without study, who yet are found all at once sufficiently learned to confound the most skilful philosophers, and sufficiently strong to resist kings and tyrants who opposed themselves to the establishment of the Christian religion which they announced.

“ Let any one consider that marvellous succession of prophets, who succeeded one another during 2000 years, and who all predicted, in so many different ways, even the minutest circumstances of the life of Jesus Christ, of His death, of His resurrection, of the mission of the apostles, of the preaching of the Gospel, of the conversion of the nations, and many other things which relate to the establishment of the Christian religion and the abolition of Judaism.

“ Let any one consider the wonderful accomplishment of these prophecies, which meet so perfectly in the person of Jesus Christ, that it is impossible, without wilful blindness, not to recognise Him.

“ Let any one consider the state of the Jewish people, both before and since the advent of Jesus Christ ; their flourishing condition before His coming, and their miserable state since their rejection of Him ; for they are to this day without any sign of religion, without a temple, without sacrifices, scattered over all the earth, the scorn and the offscouring of all nations.

“ Let any one consider the perpetuity of the Christian religion, which has always subsisted since the beginning of the world, whether among the saints of the Old Testament, who lived in the expectation of Jesus Christ before His advent, or among those who have received Him and believed in Him since His coming ; whereas no other religion has perpetuity, which is the chief characteristic of the true.

“ Lastly, let any one consider the holiness of this religion ; its doctrine, which explains even all the contradictions which meet in man ; and all the other singular, supernatural, and Divine things, which shine out on all sides of it.

“ And let any one judge, after all this, whether it be possible to doubt that the Christian religion is the only true religion, and whether any other have ever approached to it.”  
(II. iv. 12.)

Our analysis has not embraced some fragments which certainly entered into the plan of the work, but of which we could not determine the place that they should have occupied. The most remarkable are the following :— *Of Jesus Christ* (this is the well-known passage on the three orders of greatness) ; *The design of God in concealing Himself from some, and revealing Himself to others* (II. xiii. 1) ; *God cannot be profitably known but through Jesus Christ* (II. xv. 2).

Another passage worthy of being meditated upon is that in which Pascal shows that conversion, so far from being an exchange of the joys of the world for sadness, is, on the contrary, the passage from sadness, or from a false joy, to true joy, and that the attraction of this joy is, that it leads the convert to the Gospel, and keeps him there (II. xvii. 28. See also II. xvii. 72).

## II.

## RESTORATION OF PASCAL'S THOUGHTS.

WE are under great obligations to M. Faugére, but first let us thank M. Cousin. It is to him that we are indebted for this purified edition of the *Thoughts*. It is at least probable that, but for him, we should have had to wait long for it. Since the publication of his book it was doubly necessary. It was known, beyond the possibility of doubt, that we had not the true text of the *Thoughts*; and many inquired if we had the true thought of Pascal. The labour of M. Faugére has dissipated this uncertainty. Pascal is restored to us;—not the Pascal, sceptic and dissolute, of whom M. Cousin drew the black portrait, but the Pascal whom we knew,—Pascal convinced, fervent, and happy. Once more, let us thank M. Cousin. Even before the new edition, the argument that we maintained with him was in nowise desperate; it is better still, since the publication which his Memoir has called forth.

It is now also that we are made aware to what extent the timid prudence of the friends of the great man had corrupted (if that expression may be allowed) the text of these immortal fragments. M. Cousin was right when he said that there is no sort of alteration which the text has not undergone. The first editors allowed themselves every liberty, or rather imposed everything upon themselves as a duty,—to suppress, to add, to transpose, to divide, to combine—all seemed to

them to be their full right or their bounden duty. They had, in different instances, remodelled the plan of the work, the style of the author, and even his meaning. M. Faugére is only scrupulously true when he says, "that there are nowhere, whether in the first or in the subsequent editions, twenty lines in succession which do not contain some alteration, great or small." He might have added, that it is a rare thing, in these same editions, for six lines in succession to agree exactly with the original manuscript. One feels himself confounded by such recklessness. But two reflections may serve to temper this first and inevitable impression.

The *first* is, that in the point of view of the seventeenth century, the *Thoughts* of Pascal, as they were thrown out on paper, were not really *written*. Pascal would never have given them to the public under this form ; and his friends would have thought that they were wanting in their duty towards him if they had not, in his absence, done what he would certainly have done himself. No doubt Pascal would better, much better, have acquitted himself of the task ; and no comparison can be seriously instituted between such an editor and those who took his place. I should not be pardoned were I to pretend that the completed work would have been of less value than the sketch ; but what I will venture to say is, that it would have been a different, a wholly different thing—a work of Pascal rather than Pascal himself, a book rather than a man. I believe that the choice lies between the book and the man, although I do not doubt that Pascal would have transfused a portion of himself into his book. If in the work of the old editors we regret, above all else, the sacrifice of the individuality of Pascal, let

us admit that he himself would have spared it less, and that there would have been more reserve on his part than there has been temerity on theirs. With more care than any one else, he would have softened down the most vivid emotions, rounded off the most salient angles. Pascal, in fact, would have shrunk from presenting to us Pascal in all his entireness, as he would have shrunk from fire. We like in these days to see marked individuality, perhaps because we feel that it is rare. It was neither consistent with the spirit of the seventeenth century, nor with the principles of the religious school to which Pascal belonged, to permit individuality to impress itself vividly upon a man's writings. The age and Port-Royal contributed their respective shares to this maxim, "Christian piety abnegates the human *I*, and human civilisation conceals and suppresses it." Now we like to catch a glimpse, and even a sight of the man in the writer. Individuality pleases us: even egotism does not always displease us; in the seventeenth century the public were less curious, and writers were more reserved. Dignity of manners appeared to demand this reserve. What Pascal could least pardon in Montaigne, was that he had spoken so much of himself; and La Fontaine could not be personal, even as he could not be *naïf* and dreamy, but on condition of being in some sort outlawed from the republic of literature. I conclude that the *Thoughts*, whether published by the friends of Pascal or by himself, could not preserve that character of style which is a main element of the lively impression which we receive from them, and of the species of popularity which they have gained. I give this consideration for what it may be worth. The next will perhaps be more effective. If we had no 

had the *Thoughts* such as we have them, it is probable that we should not have had them at all.

No one, after the death of Pascal, would have published the *Thoughts* without altering their text. It might have been less essentially modified. It might also have been more. It ran more risks than we are apt to believe. The worst of all, and the most probable, was that it should never appear. Such as it was published, it must have appeared, at its first publication, a very bold step; and we doubt whether certain pages would have been printed, if the editors had appreciated the bearing which they might have on the minds of a portion of the public. The only person who dared, whether from mental fearlessness, or from natural partiality, insist upon a genuine publication, was Madame Perrier. All the zealots and all the prudent were against her. If considerable changes had not been resolved upon, Pascal would have remained buried in his manuscript, where it would have been long ere any one would have gone to search for him, and a long forgetfulness might easily have passed into an eternal proscription. We may therefore be tempted, strange as it may appear, rather to thank the editors than to blame them. It was better, at all events, to possess Pascal under this form than not to possess him at all.

With whom would Pascal have been better pleased, the old editors or the new editor? Neither with those, nor with this, I believe; but much less with M. Faugére than with the Duke of Roannez and M. de Brienne. Nevertheless M. Faugére deserves nothing but commendation. After the imperfect editions, after the lapse of two centuries, but especially after the inferences that were attempted to be

drawn from the study of the original manuscript, a work like his was indispensable. Pascal would, perhaps, have admitted this; but this is very different from saying he would have been pleased with it. It is with the first efforts and the first gropings of a writer somewhat as with private life, which ought to be walled round; or as with the sacredness of letters, more inviolable than any other. An invasion has been made into the moral homestead of the author of the *Thoughts*; his seal has been broken; and however such violences may find their excuses in the interest of those on whom they are perpetrated, they are violences nevertheless. Pascal would have felt it keenly. No one, it has been often said, could make up his mind to confide to the most intimate of his friends all the ideas through which his mind has passed. Who would be willing to confess to others what he is afraid to confess to himself? To this confession Pascal has been compelled by M. Faugére; and the confidant that he has given him is simply the public. You will tell me that Pascal had no cause to blush for his *Thoughts*, which assuredly were not evil thoughts. But who wishes to be caught in the fact of uncertainty and groping his way? Who does not experience a degree of shame on seeing not merely a stranger, but a familiar friend, enter his chamber while it is still in disorder in a morning? Glad to see you; but why did not you wait? An hour later, you would have found me afoot, dressed, all my furniture arranged, and my chamber swept. It is too disagreeable to be taken at first getting out of bed, or in the disorder of the first hours of the day. And much more so to be constrained to give up to the public the progress of a labour of which the public were the object. From this secret labour

has issued, or was meant to issue, an easy, firm, rapid speech, such as that of a man in whom thought and expression spring up in a continuous stream. The public have no concern to consider what it may have cost. In truth, they are not ignorant of this; but it is to their advantage not to see it. In the present case, they force themselves into the workshop of the writer, count and handle his engines, discover combination, and almost artifice, where they expected to see pure inspiration. If this please them, so much the better for them; but will the author, for his part, be particularly delighted? Pascal was far above the childishness of false bashfulness. I admit it; but there is something of a graver kind here. In those ripped up rags which you present us with, Pascal is not a man who writes, but a man who thinks; we should rather say, he is a man searching for his thought. Do not mistake the matter; many of his affirmations are but questions in disguise. He often says *It is so*, when he means *Is it so?* He enunciates in absolute terms what is true for him only in a relative sense. Sometimes even it is not he that speaks to you, but a third party, perhaps his opponent. One must have no experience of the profession of a writer if he will not admit, *a priori*, all that I have supposed. To *think* is alternately to affirm and to doubt, and ask and to answer. We seldom think except with the help of words,—a sort of chemical reagents, under whose action thought is decomposed. These words, of course, need not be uttered, or written. But it is more convenient to do so. Many persons cannot meditate but pen in hand. They think only by means of writing. This was not the case with Pascal. But it is true that a considerable proportion of the pages of this collection exhibit

to us, not the result, as a book ought to do, but the internal labour of his thought; I might almost say, the fermentation of his mind. The idea, in many places, is not more definite than the form. But if he had seen himself given over to the public in this state, would not Pascal have felt himself to be betrayed; and is he not so to a certain extent? Let the grave and judicious editor of the *Thoughts* pardon me this expression, the meaning of which he will not misapprehend. His work is as loyal as it was necessary; and, having spoken of the involuntary impression which it would have made on the author of the *Thoughts*, I add, that on full consideration, and taking into account the time and the circumstances, he would have acknowledged that M. Faugére has done a service to him as well as to us.

It can no longer be said that the first editors had left the real Pascal—that is, according to some, the sceptical and the despairing Pascal—concealed at the bottom of the original text. That text has been presented to us in its integrity. M. Faugére has carried scrupulosity farther, if possible, than the first editors had carried license. He has presented us even with isolated words of which no one can make out any meaning; and even when one of these words was illegible, he has shown its existence and marked its place. Now more than ever you can judge whether Pascal had by him good reasons for being a Christian; but now more than ever you will judge that he was one. He has not, indeed, become one in the ordinary way. He is, if not the first, at least the first in an express way, to summon to his counsel, on the great question of the truth of Christianity, the moral faculties, which had been deprived of their right of suffrage by the intellectual faculties. He has claimed for the whole

man the right of judgment on this great question. He has summoned from the depths of our nature, new witnesses whose testimony was never received before. He has held that their testimony, neglected as it had been, was fully sufficient to each one of us for himself; and that strictly there was no true light, no useful conviction, for any one who had not heard their testimony. Fortified by their depositions, he has ventured to reduce to their proper value, not only the objections of the opponents of his faith, but more than one prejudice, more than one *petitio principii*, which religion may haply afterwards be able to raise into a certainty, but which cannot contribute to the certainty of religion. All this appeared, it must be said, in the former editions, disfigured as they were. The present edition exhibits on more sides this characteristic of Pascal's apologetics. But that is all. It does not create this characteristic; it does not modify it; and, above all, it does not give any other idea of the religious state of Pascal than that which we had all along. Perhaps the author of the *Thoughts* appears in this new edition surrounded with a purer and a serener light.

This, and the great number of new things which M. Faugére has restored, are not, fundamentally, the only advantages of this faithful edition. One cannot read the new *Pascal* without being struck with the very individual character of the religion of this great man. An edition prepared by himself, and necessarily in concert with his friends—an official publication, so to speak—would greatly have lessened this character and this merit of the work. After all, the editors of Pascal have treated him with much more respect when dead than they would have done while he was alive.

They would have demanded many more sacrifices than they have allowed themselves alterations. Death has secured us a safe-guard to the religious individuality of the author. Let him be Catholic and Jansenist. That is what cannot be disputed. But he is both the one and the other after his own manner; perhaps not always to the extent that his friends would have desired. By turns he makes use of technical terms and neglects them; his doctrine is plain even when it is exact; he is not a doctor, he is a man of the world, and, what is still better, he is a man. For a long time, it appears to me, religion had no apologists but professional doctors. It needed an apologist of this new stamp, since, in short, it is scarcely probable that a doctor can ever become again a man. Pascal, in the old editions, and especially in the new, is such a one more than he believes, more than he wishes. And perhaps it would not be very difficult to distinguish the passages in which he is a Christian according to the rule of his Church and his party, from those in which he is a Christian after his own manner.

The apologetic method employed in the book of *Thoughts* has a bearing which Pascal, clear-sighted and far-sighted though he was, perhaps did not see. We shall better make ourselves understood by retracing our steps a little.

In religion, the principle of examination always comes in somewhere. We must, at the least, examine whether we can believe without examination. The Catholic examines as well as the Protestant. He examines the foundations of the authority of the Church. Up to the point of his being fully convinced of this authority, he acts the part of a Protestant; he is a Protestant. The examination which devolves upon him embraces a great number of very important ques-

tions. It would be difficult to say what questions it does not involve. The whole space which extends between Ontology and History, including these two extremes, becomes in succession the field of the discussion. The questions that present themselves are of such a nature, and of such difficulty, that authority, if there be any authority, would not be too much to resolve them. But there is no authority as yet: we are but seeking for it. It is not upon authority that authority can be founded. There might be the Scripture; but to send us all alone to the Scripture, to leave the question to be debated between the Scripture and us, that would be to admit that we have a right to determine the sense of the Scripture, without appeal to authority: it would be to grant precisely what, under the system of authority, is peremptorily denied us; and it would be difficult to comprehend how this could be granted to us at one time, without its being granted throughout, how the whole Protestant system should not be included in this temporary concession. Shall we have recourse to the Holy Spirit? Be it so. Let us suppose, then, that there is a Holy Spirit, an action of the Spirit of God on the spirit of man—of the individual man, I say, because, in the case supposed, it is an individual who inquires and examines. The Spirit of God, then, is to be bestowed on the individual; but if this be possible at one time, it is possible always. Authority is thenceforth useless. The Holy Spirit takes the place of the Church. This is what cannot be granted us by those who maintain the principle of authority in religion. In strict logic, they are obliged to confiscate the Holy Spirit to the profit of the Church.

They send us back then—us inquirers—to natural reason,

and to science, which is one of its acquisitions and one of its instruments. On reason has devolved the solution of a certain number of questions, of such a nature, and of such difficulty, that we cannot conceive why authority has not been applied, in the first instance, to the solution of these very questions. It is an enormous imperfection, an incomprehensible gap in the system. We cannot see how that reason which should be capable, of itself, of resolving these questions, should not be capable, of itself, of arriving at the true sense of the Scripture. Let us suppose that natural reason capacitates a certain number of men to resolve them, that number is very small. There remains an immense multitude of minds to whom the thing is impossible, and who nevertheless have need to be convinced of the authority of the Church, since the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth, inasmuch as it perpetually determines the sense of the Divine oracles. The Scripture and the Holy Spirit being put out of the question for all, and reason also perhaps for all, and certainly for the immense majority,—what remains? In virtue of what principle are we to believe in authority? The accident of birth and of first impressions will be all. Apart from this weakness, there is nought but Protestantism,—but Protestantism throughout. We are landed irrevocably in Protestantism, not by a particular result of our examination, but by the fact of examining. We must not examine for an instant, or we must examine all through.

Pascal supposes, or rather he assumes, that, on examining ourselves, and examining the contents of the Gospel with our conscience, we cannot fail to attain to faith, the Holy Spirit aiding us thereto. But, with him, faith is inseparable

from understanding. To believe is to comprehend with the heart, with a new heart which the Holy Spirit bestows upon us. The Holy Spirit, not the Church, is authoritative. Let any one read the *Thoughts* attentively, and let him answer this single question ; Is not the Church authority a superfluity in the system of Pascal ? It would be worth the trouble to study, under this point of view, the invaluable fragments which have now been presented to us in their integrity.

Having thus expressed, in a very general way, the impression which has been made upon me by this restoration of Pascal, or rather, this Pascal restored, I must now give some details as to the work of M. Faugére.

This work is remarkable in every respect. I do not speak of the material labour, which, independently of all else, challenges our respect, and especially our gratitude. It is doubtless a great matter that M. Faugére gives us a complete text, perfectly pure, by deciphering an autograph bristling with difficulties, collecting and comparing all the manuscripts, referring to the originals for every part of the text, rendering account not only of the preliminary jottings of Pascal, but of his corrections, his erasions, his marginal notes, all that may be called his hesitations, scruples, and repentings as a writer, and much more the most secret fluctuations of his thought. The patient and sagacious attention of the editor has produced important corrections in more than one passage where the text appeared to be unalterably fixed. For example, in the passage where the old editors made Pascal say, speaking of the extreme divisibility of matter, "*un atome imperceptible*," and where M. Cousin had read and greatly admired "*un raccourci d'abîme*," M. Faugére has restored the proper reading, and has given us an expression

which, as he thinks, and as we think, has much more energy, and especially much more accuracy, “*un raccourci d'atome*.” It was also a great boon to give us passages which no one of the known manuscripts contains, letters and fragments borrowed from quarters whose very existence was unknown. It was also no small service to enable us constantly, and without difficulty, to contrast the true text with the ordinary text. Lastly, it was an important and valuable service to indicate the source of the quotations, and to point out the numerous cases in which the author of the *Thoughts* borrows from different writers whom he does not name, most frequently from Montaigne. M. Faugére has done all this, and much more. I shall not speak of his *Introduction*, an excellent bibliographical and literary piece, all of which is valuable, and the simple and grave style of which indicates a practised writer. I confine myself to the book itself, and in the book, to the arrangement of the materials.

The collection opens with some letters of Pascal, some addressed to his family, and the rest to Mademoiselle de Roannez. In order to make it intelligible that these cannot place their author among the models of epistolary style, it will perhaps be sufficient to quote this single expression from the long letter to M. Perier: “*Sur ce grand fondement, je vous commencerai ce que j'ai à dire par un discours (raisonnement) bien consolatif à ceux qui ont assez de liberté d'esprit pour le concevoir au fort de la douleur.*” But if this letter is not written in the taste of those of Voltaire or of Madame de Sévigné, it is well to know that the better part of one of the finest chapters of the *Thoughts*, in the old editions, is borrowed from this letter. This one, therefore, was not entirely unpublished ; but most of the others were ;

and when I state that this correspondence of Pascal occupies sixty-two pages of the first volume, I need say no more to show the value of the gift that has been presented to us by the new editor of the *Thoughts*. It would be still better appreciated if I could venture on quotations: I shall indulge myself in one only; but that will suffice for the purpose.

“I fear (Pascal writes to his sister) that here you do not sufficiently distinguish between the things of which you speak, and those of which the world speaks; since it is beyond doubt that it is sufficient to have once learned these latter things, and to have retained them so far as not to require to be taught them again; whereas it is not sufficient to have once comprehended those of the other kind, and to have known them in a good way, that is to say, by the internal operation of God, so as to preserve a like knowledge of them, although we may well retain the recollection of them. There is no reason why we should not be able to remember them, or why we should not retain in our memory an epistle of St Paul as easily as a book of Virgil. But the knowledge which we acquire in this way, as well as the continuation of it, is but an effect of memory; whereas, in order that those who are of heaven may understand this secret and strange language, it is needful that the same grace which alone can give the first understanding of it, should continue it and render it always present, by graving it incessantly on the hearts of the faithful, so as to keep it always alive; as, in the blessed, God is continually renewing their beatitude, which is an effect and a consequence of grace; as also the Church holds that the Father continually produces the Son, and maintains the eternity of His being by an effusion of His own substance, which is without interruption as well as without end.” (I. p. 13.)

This is admirable. Readers may perhaps not so much like, but they will not read without interest, as an indication of one of the tendencies of the Christianity of Port-Royal, the letter in which Pascal exhorts Madame Perier not to engage her daughter, still very young, "in that most perilous and lowest of the conditions of Christianity;" this condition being none other than that of marriage. Readers who have not forgotten the interesting pages in which M. Faugére speaks of Pascal's feelings towards Mademoiselle de Roannez, will peruse with lively curiosity the letters addressed to that young lady. What they will find in them is much better than what they seek, and that will, I fear, be a disappointment. It is difficult to conceive aught more impersonal than this correspondence. Pascal might have written so from the abode of glory; and if holy compassion is not a stranger to that blessed abode, he might still from that height let fall words like the following :

"When I come to think that these same persons may fall, and be among the unhappy number of the condemned, and that there are so many of them who will fall from glory, and will, by their negligence, leave the crown to be taken by others which God had offered to them, I cannot endure the thought. And the fear of seeing them in the eternal state of misery, after having, with so good reason, believed them to be in the other state, makes me turn away my mind from this idea, and have recourse to God, praying Him not to abandon the feeble creatures whom He has gained to Himself, and saying to Him, on behalf of the two persons whom you know, what the Church still says with St Paul, '*Lord, Thyself accomplish the work which Thou hast Thyself begun.*'" (I. p. 42.)

M. Faugére has very suitably placed at the close of the letters two well-known pieces, which reappear in his edition ; the one as it is in all the editions, the other with a few alterations. These are, the *Prayer to ask of God the Improvement of Sickness*, and the *Writing on the Conversion of a Sinner*, which issued from the pen of Pascal at the period of what is commonly called his first conversion. Under the title of a *Preface to a Treatise on the Vacuum*, we next find, restored in many places, the text of the piece entitled by the Abbé Bossuet *Discourse on Authority in the matter of Philosophy*. Then comes the *Discourse on the Passions of Love*, which had been previously published, but somewhat less exactly, in the *Revue des Deux-mondes*. After M. Cousin, after M. Faugére, shall we venture to speak of it ? In our opinion, as in theirs, the authenticity of this writing is proved by internal evidence. If the date be equally certain, this discourse must have been written between the two conversions of Pascal ; and we may form an idea of the state of his mind in this interval, on reading these words : “ How happy is a life, when it begins with love and ends with ambition ! If I had to choose a life, I should take this.” Pascal chose another, and did not end with ambition, at least with worldly ambition. “ I have ambition, but nobler and finer.” But if ever love, other than Divine love, were worthy of the immortality of our nature, it is that of which Pascal describes to us the *passions* (that is, the internal emotions), and which he had without doubt experienced ; for his procedure in this discourse is essentially that of observation, and the whole piece is an incomparable mixture of subtle analysis and lively intuition. “ Things are often written (says he) which cannot be proved otherwise than by

requiring all men to reflect on themselves, and to experience the truth of what is said. In this consists the force of the proofs of what I say." What a pity that Pascal did not write another discourse on the *Passions of Ambition!* An ambition of the same stamp with this love, what a marvel would it not be! We have difficulty in realising it, and the ambitions which we have the opportunity of observing can scarcely help us to form an idea of it. It is remarkable that he who has referred all morality to *thought*, should have made of love, born, as he admits, of the senses, an act or a phenomenon of the soul: Besides that he does not admit the possibility of love except as dating from the age "when we begin to be *disturbed* by the reason," he declares that "in proportion as one has more mind, his passions are greater, because, the passions being only sentiments and thoughts which belong purely to the mind, however they may be occasioned by the body, it is evident that they are no more than the mind itself, and that thus they fill all its capacity." A little further on he uses terms which might appear strange. "The purity of the mind causes the purity of the passion."—"We are born (he says elsewhere) with a character of love in our hearts, which is developed in proportion as the mind is perfected, and which leads us to love what appears to us beautiful." All this carries us far enough away from *Scenes of Life in Paris*, and even from the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. J. J. Rousseau, who would fain, in his compassion for his age, have made it "reascend to love," did not flatter himself, I imagine, and has not attempted, to make it reascend so high as this. This love which is of thought, this love which is *the mind itself*, whence had Pascal derived the idea of it? Was it only in his great soul, or

was this idea diffused in the world at the time when he wrote ? This second supposition does not appear to be without foundation. It is thus that among certain people love was described; and I am not afraid to add that, up to a certain point, it must have been felt as it was described. Without employing terms so absolute as Pascal does, we must acknowledge that thought mixes itself up with all our passions ; that it modifies and transforms them at its pleasure ; and that, immediately beyond the sensations and the consciousness, begins a life in which our belief becomes a certain power, and in which it is sufficient to believe that a thing is, in order that it may be in fact. From age to age we invent new sentiments ; instincts are stationary ; sensations are limited ; conscience in all things has but one word, and that word admits of no synonym. Thought, which sees in all things fixed points, but without extension, makes each of them a centre for its own activity, and develops all without displacing aught. Thought at all times, but most of all in the seventeenth century, has been mixed up with love, and love has become a passion of the mind. That which Pascal felt, and what he has so well described, was assuredly of a choice edition, of which there were few copies. But I am not the less disposed to believe that it was the reprint of a text, less excellent without doubt, but already well purged. Could ambition have been idealised to the same degree ? How fine it would have been, I repeat it, to learn it thus from Pascal ! But rather let us congratulate this great mind as having been stopped on the way, and never having arrived at it.

Meantime, we are glad that he has known love in such purity, and that he has known it. “Thou wert a man,”

says Lamartine to Homer ; “ we perceive it by thy tears.” If other proofs failed, we should perceive thus that Pascal was a man, and for most people this will be the best proof. I do not conceal, for my own part, the pleasure which this discovery occasioned me, since, without lessening Pascal, it brings him somewhat more within reach of all men, and permits us to love a little more familiarly him whom we loved doubtless (for who is there that loves not Pascal?), but whom we loved so far off and so high above us. How are we to pass now, as the order of this volume requires us, to the discourse on the *Geometrical Spirit*? Pascal would be astonished at our embarrassment ; for, in the discourse on the *Passions of Love*, he anticipates, in the most natural way in the world, this other subject by this expression, which we meet without any surprise, so well are we prepared for it by what goes before. “ There are two sorts of mind, the one geometrical, and the other what we may call that of subtlety. . . . When the two go together, what pleasure does love give !” Let us leave frivolous souls, consequently little formed for true love, to make light of this geometry, without which they say that they have got on very well hitherto ; and let us believe, on the authority of Pascal, in the potency of the geometrical spirit in a *passion of the thought*. After the piece now referred to comes the fragment on the *Art of Persuading*. Then come *Divers Thoughts*; that is to say, all the shorter fragments which could not be connected with more important articles, and which do not appear to have belonged, in Pascal’s intention, to the apology for Christianity. A considerable number of these thoughts appear now for the first time. In most cases the first editors are excusable, even justifiable, in having suppressed

them; but not always. I understand why they kept back this thought:—"It is not the nature of man to be always advancing; he has his goings and his comings." Perhaps they remembered that Pascal had elsewhere said, "All the succession of men through the course of so many ages, ought to be considered as one man, who subsists always, and is always learning." But what led to the suppression of the following thought?—"Must we kill men in order that there may be no criminals? This is only to make two instead of one." This quotation has been lost to the advocates of the abolition of capital punishments.

This thought also ought to have escaped proscription:

"Ordinary people have the power of not thinking of what they do not wish to think of. 'Do not think of the passages of the Messiah,' said the Jew to his son. This our own people often do. Thus false religions are preserved, and even the true religion, in the esteem of many persons. But there are people who have not the power thus to refrain from thinking, and who think so much the more because they are forbidden to do so. These persons rid themselves of false religions, and even of the true, if they do not find solid reasonings."

If Pascal is a Pyrrhonist, at all events it is not here. Will this thought cause those to enter into themselves who, in religion—I say, in the religion of free inquiry,—continually put tradition in place of proof? Will it cause to look to their ways those minds which flatter themselves that they are not "ordinary people," and who nevertheless habitually travel zigzag across the Gospel, avoiding with the happiest art all the passages which contradict their system—all of St Paul that is in St John, or of St John that is in St Paul?

I have said that this is an art ; but it must be rather an instinct. For if it were an art, that of passing dry between the drops of a heavy shower would not be more marvellous. On every subject, religious or otherwise, the talent of seeing only what one wishes to see is one of the most frightful which the devil has succeeded in teaching to men.

One thought more, which ought not to have been withheld from the public.

“ The peculiar property of everything ought to be sought after ; the peculiar property of power is to protect.”

It is political power that is under discussion. Perhaps the *peculiar property* of this power is rather to *act*, but its *end* is certainly to protect. In general, all force ought to resolve itself into benefits, and finds its vindication only in this employment of itself. The power which does not preserve, or which does not create, is meaningless.

What has been derisively called the *Amulet* comes next, in a corrected text. The *entire submission to Jesus Christ and to my director* is thrown into a note, as not being sufficiently authenticated for admission into the text.

What follows is the celebrated profession of faith ; *I love poverty*, etc. ; which the first editors introduced into the apology for Christianity, because their plan did not permit them to find any other place for it. The new editor remarks that this profession of faith at first began with these two lines, which Pascal afterwards blotted out : “ I love all men as my brethren, because they are all redeemed.”

The thoughts on *Eloquence and Style*, so generally known, come after this profession of faith. The character of these thoughts, too few in number, and of which Fenelon's dialogues on eloquence appear to be the worthy pendant, is

well known. To strip truth of all its coverings, even to the last; to leave nothing, and especially to put nothing, between the object and the mind which contemplates it; to write as a man and not as a writer, is the whole substance of this too short chapter. I am glad to meet here this maxim, suggested apparently by the reading of Martial's Epigrams: "We ought to please those who have human and tender feelings." Is it not people wholly different that we, makers of epigrams, of histories, of treatises, flatter ourselves that we please? Are the applauses of the wicked the least coveted?

The pages which follow, entirely unpublished till now, are not those that we are the least indebted to M. Faugére for having collected. That chapter, which may be considered as an appendix to the *Provincial Letters*, is composed of thoughts, or rather of notes, on the *Jesuits and Jansenists*. "It is with a sentiment of very lively curiosity (says the editor) that we have found these sketches, hitherto unknown, these rapid indications which rushed out, under the first inspiration of genius, to become ere long the master-piece in our language." Who is there that will not share the emotion of M. Faugére? Pascal, speaking only for himself, and questioning himself, as it were, upon his own thought, is here more living, if possible, than in his finished work. The gold is to be encrusted in the stone, but here we see it run all burning; and more than one secret emotion, which could not find its way into a book, is here betrayed after two centuries. I shall only quote one passage; but it has its value, and, I will add, its application at all times. "If there ever be a time when we ought to make profession of two contrary beliefs, it is when we are reproached for omitting one of them. Therefore the Jesuits

and the Jansenists are both at fault in concealing them ; but the Jansenists most, for the Jesuits have made the better profession of the two." Is this the opinion of Pascal ? Is it an objection which he proposes to answer ? I know not. But that is an excellent principle which he lays down at the commencement. Let us treasure it in our hearts.

Further on (in his *Thoughts and Notes for the Provincials*), M. Faugére opens to us the studio of the great artist, and in those thousand scattered fragments we recognise at the first glance, so inimitable is the cut of his chisel, the most celebrated passages in Pascal's master-piece. They are rough notes, often the beginnings and the terminations of passages ; but who, full of recollections of the work, can peruse them without a lively interest ? It is more than an interest of curiosity ; for if it is only amusing to recognise in the words *mentiris impudentissime*, thrown out in the middle of passages that have no reference to them, the germ of one of the best known and oftenest quoted passages in the *Provincials*, it is instructive to find in its state of imperfection and sketch what the talent of Pascal has rendered so perfect in the execution of his design. Several of the *Thoughts on the Pope and the Church* are published for the first time ; and the piece entitled by Bossuet, *a comparison of the ancient Christians with those of our own day*, a much bolder essay than the author supposed it to be, forms part of these thoughts. The *conversation with Saci on Epictetus and Montaigne*, is presented to us under the form of a dialogue, as Fontaine had preserved it. That with M. de Roannez, on the *condition of the great*, is given us without any change. Some words, spoken by Pascal in conversation, and placed by his friends in his apologetic work, close this precious volume.

A first and rapid examination of the second volume gives rise, in the first instance, to a sort of disappointment. In the old editions it was almost a book ; here, very evidently, it is but notes. And M. Faugére having rigorously excluded all that Pascal had not intended to form part of his great work, the volume, notwithstanding the restoration of a great number of passages which are not in the old editions, appears poorer, and in some sort attenuated. But nothing is lost, since all that has been kept back is found elsewhere ; and if the book has less the air of a book, it is in fact much better arranged, and places us in a much better position to discover Pascal's plan. It has generally been admitted that the first editors conformed, as far as was possible, in respect of the order of the thoughts, to the intentions of the author. But the work of M. Faugére shows that this is a mistake. There is, for the arrangement of the materials, something better than the recollection of the conversation reported by M. Perier ; there are the titles, which the new editor has restored, of the principal divisions of the book. And these titles are sometimes so remarkable, that it required some courage to suppress them. Thus one of the most important chapters had been entitled *Deceptive Powers*. There is some eloquence even in this simple combination of words. But these titles, which have guided M. Faugére, might have guided his predecessors. Why have not they given as the *Preface* the piece which Pascal has distinguished by that title ? Whereas they have made it the second article of the volume, and have converted into a first or introductory article a chapter on the contradictions or disproportions in human nature, which evidently belongs to the body of the work. Why did they not maintain the

general division which Pascal had expressly indicated by the two following titles :—*First Part—Wretchedness of man without God, or, that nature is corrupted by nature itself.* *Second Part—Happiness of man with God, or, that there is a restorer by the Scripture?* The more we study the new edition, the more we shall be persuaded that M. Faugére has fallen, almost exactly, upon the true plan of the work. In this way he has brought us, in some sort, nearer to the author ; and no one can conceive, before examining this work, how in it the author appears more present, more living. It is like passing from the saloon to the closet.

This volume is not less remarkable than the preceding for the numerous passages in which the editor, following the manuscripts, corrects the corrections, often unhappy, and oftener useless, of the first editors. I shall cite only one example ; but it will be found worthy of being cited. All the world has read, in Article XVII., this thought, “ I willingly believe the histories whose witnesses submit to death ;” and all the world, perhaps, on reading it, has shaken its head, since, in short, if we were to believe all the histories whose witnesses have submitted to death, we should be in danger of believing at once several histories which contradict one another. But M. Faugére assures us that what Pascal wrote was this, “ I believe no histories but those whose witnesses would submit to death ;” a more truthful saying, however paradoxical in appearance, and which is even not without depth. Certainly I may believe a history whose witness does not offer his life in pledge of his veracity ; for the belief of this history may not merit such a sacrifice, and the witness may not think it worthy of it. It may be very true and very credible in the absence of

these two conditions. But when the question is as to a history for which it were right, if it be true, to give one's life; if it obtain not this sacrifice, if it inspire not this devotedness, if it have not rendered itself mistress of the whole heart of any of those who attest it, we may boldly declare that it is not true.\* Several men attesting that God has come down to earth, and that by taking upon Himself all the sufferings and all the shame of our condition, He has saved us for ever, and no one of them showing himself disposed to give his life for this truth, it is too evident that here is a history false and destitute of proofs, since, if the fact is true, if God has made this prodigious sacrifice,—let us take lower though still high ground,—if a crucified person has risen from the dead after three days, it is without doubt in order that the heart of man may be subdued to God, and thoroughly renewed; an effect which evidently has not been produced, if no one were willing to do for the attestation of the truth of this history what thousands have done for the most unimportant interests, if no one were willing to die for it. What the editors have made Pascal say is not absolutely false, if they have understood merely that the sight of witnesses so devoted creates a prejudice in their favour, and disposes us to hear them. But the expression of the editors carries the thought further, and too far. That of Pascal, leaving something to be supplied which everybody supplies without difficulty, is within the limits of exact truth.

In respect of *variations*, or rather of the traces which here and there remain of Pascal's progressive labour upon one and the same thought, this volume is still more interesting than the former. Every one will remark the twofold copy

\* See Appendix, Note L.

of the *preface*; and every one will be astonished to see Pascal recompose a considerable piece in order to strip it of most of its finest traits, and reduce it, in some sort, to its elements. M. Faugére considers that "Pascal's choice was undecided, since he has not deleted either of the two fragments;" but it appears that that which we consider inferior was composed last. It is difficult to doubt it. And if we are not wrong in preferring the first version, it would be curious to inquire, but perhaps impossible to discover, the reasons which led him, if not to prefer, at least to attempt, the second edition. Something in the first displeased him. What was it then? Nothing in it displeases us; all appears to us excellent. It is well to inform the reader that the piece in question is the first half of the admirable *article* entitled in the old editions, *Of the necessity of studying religion*.

Let us speak lastly of the additions, or of the fragments, longer or shorter, which we now possess for the first time, thanks to the cares of the new editor. These are numerous in this volume, and some of them are of great value. Undoubtedly the most important is the piece extending from p. 338 to p. 345 of this volume, and entitled by the author himself, *The mystery of Jesus*. It forms part of the chapter entitled, *Of Jesus Christ*. "Among the number of unpublished fragments which we insert in this chapter (says M. Faugére), we must specify that one which Pascal has entitled, *The mystery of Jesus*. Written with a sort of melancholic effusion, continuously, and almost without erasures, these pages are remarkable for the thoroughly mystic character with which they are impressed. The reader will be especially struck with the passage in which the author, wrapt into a tender contemplation, sees Jesus Christ present, con-

verses with Him, hears His word and answers it. We might suppose ourselves reading a chapter of the *De Imitatione*. We shall not attempt to express it otherwise. This is, in fact, the character of this precious fragment, of which we shall only detach some sentences.

“Jesus will be in agony till the end of the world. No sleep for Him during this time.”

“Be comforted. You would not seek me, but that you have found me.”

“Be penitent for your secret sins, and for the hidden malignity of those that you know.”

Several of the previously unpublished thoughts contained in this second volume had their synonyms or their equivalents in the old editions ; but added to the thoughts already published, they deepen their impression, and render more sensible certain tendencies of the mind and the religion of Pascal which were already known. I will even venture to say that, frequently enough, what the old text made only perceptible, becomes considerable and capital in the text of M. Faugére. I shall not speak of the *Pessimism* of Pascal, which is far more evident than his *Pyrrhonism*, and which, in the balance into which this great mind heaped the elements of his religious conviction, weighed much more, I believe, than the insufficiency of our means of knowledge. Of the two wants with which human nature is continually distressed, that of happiness is not only the more universally felt, and the more constantly experienced, it is also the more imperious. And this want is not purely sensual ; it is intellectual. It is not only for the *soul*, it is also for the *mind*, that happiness is a necessity. Happiness makes part of truth. To yearn for it pure, entire, unalterable, has there-

fore naught in it that dishonours us ; and the man most set free from the dominion of the senses, the most disinterested man, does not, in this sense, yearn for it less intensely than the miser, the voluptuary, and the selfish man. From this want, very noble in this point of view, results a more or less severe estimate of human destiny, submitted to our judgment under the same title and in the same manner as moral actions. Great minds have professed *optimism* ; but optimism is condemned. The wisdom of nature and the wisdom of Christianity have agreed in its condemnation. It is true that from the same judgment they have drawn very different conclusions ; but it is only here that the separation between them begins. I am wrong. Even in their estimate of the facts, they could not but differ on many points ; but it is enough that, on the whole, they have given the same verdict. A serious philosophy is of necessity a pessimist philosophy. Pessimism is one of the doctrines, or one of the foundations of the doctrine, of Pascal. At bottom, if we take any account of judgments in detail, the whole world, in one sense or another, is really pessimist. People may say, in general terms, that all goes on well ; but from hour to hour, who is there that is content, even among the happy, yea especially among the happy ? Who is there that is content, except those who, with St Paul, and in the same school with St Paul, have *learned* to be content ? Add together the disappointments and the murmurings, and tell us if Pessimism is not the result. In practice, Pascal is not among the discontented, speculatively he is ; or, if you will, he is not a pessimist personally, but he is on account and in name of the universe. The simple restitution of some thoughts which the old editors had set aside, makes this

essentially speculative and intellectual sadness in his work still more gloomy. But I am still more struck with another of his views, to which the restoration of the true text of the *Thoughts* has given, as it appears to me, an entirely new relief. I allude to what was, in the view of this great man, the nature or the condition of faith.

We have already seen him carefully exclude *habit* from the number of the elements of faith, among which, instead, he allows a perfectly legitimate place to the *will*. We shall find him notwithstanding, in this volume, propose for religious inquiries, what Descartes has proposed for philosophical investigations, that is, to operate, as much as possible, under the receiver, and in a perfect vacuum. Such appears to me to be the purport of several passages;—of this among others. “So far from having heard anything being the rule of your belief, you ought to believe nothing without putting yourself in a condition as if you had never heard it.” Noble thought! Elementary Protestantism, which is at the foundation of all serious conviction, and of which historical Protestantism is but an application, more or less happy. Examination,—I do not say individual examination, for that would be an inadmissible pleonasm,—is then, in principle, at the beginning of the religion of every one, at the beginning of the belief even of the Catholic. The Catholic must of necessity set out by being a Protestant. All serious men belong to this elementary, abstract, and preliminary religion, up to a point where the road, dividing, opens two ways,—in one of which the Catholic proceeds, under the banner of the authority of the Church; in the other the Protestant (in the historical acceptation of the term), under the auspices of the authority of the Scriptures.

If science had been necessary for them in order to reach the point of divergence, it is evident that only a very small number could ever reach it, or even put themselves on the road. That is to say, in other words, that religion in general is the affair only of the learned, and even only of the very learned, if we consider the present time. If, on the contrary, in order to arrive at the point where the separation takes place,—the point at which, being already *Christian*, the choice is to be made between the two communions ;—if, I say, in order to reach this point, science has not been necessary, if we have been able, without the aid of history, of criticism, and of philosophy, to rise to the conviction of the truth of Christianity, we have succeeded by means of the heart, or of the Holy Spirit, or perhaps by these two means combined. The question is, to know whether these, having been sufficient up to this point, will not be sufficient beyond it. I only state the question ; and now return to Pascal, to quote from him some words which are not found in the ordinary text.

“ It is the *agreement of yourself with yourself*, and the constant voice of your reason, and not that of others, which should make you believe.”

“ To believe is so important.”

“ A hundred contradictions might be true.”

“ If antiquity were the rule of belief, *the ancients must have been without rule.*”

What was it that led to the exclusion of these thoughts ? Was it their obscurity ? I admit that they are not without it. But how many others, in the old editions, are still less clear ! There was then some other reason. Kind reader, I leave you to seek for it. I leave you also to reflect at

leisure on the text which I have transcribed. It is not so obscure but that you can disentangle from it some distinct idea, and draw from it some conclusion. Were the book of the *Thoughts* composed entirely of similar fragments, as obscure, as detached, as abrupt, it would still be a book of immense value. Considerably numerous difficulties, some errors, even contradictions, cannot form a reason why we should set ourselves in opposition to the public admiration which this book has so long enjoyed. Though it has let some irreverent words fall upon Descartes, we will not, in our turn, speak of it with irreverence. On sight of it as it is, as Pascal left it to us, our respect is increased, we love it better, because, under this form, it better exhibits to us the candour and the mental courage of the great man into whose intimacy we are introduced. We conclude therefore, as we began, with well-deserved thanks to M. Faugére for having piously collected these venerable, these sacred ruins.

## III.

## PASCAL, NOT THE WRITER, BUT THE MAN.

OF what elements was that rare individuality composed, which appeared in the world under the name of *Blaise Pascal*? To this inquiry, gentlemen, we have devoted the last moments of our last interview. The external life of Pascal is of some assistance to us in this work; but his writings, especially his *Thoughts*, those secret monologues or intimate dialogues of Pascal with himself, will aid us still more. For the sake of brevity, I have thought it good to proceed synthetically,—that is to say, to begin by announcing the results, and adding the proofs, or at least the indications of the proofs.

At the head of the attributes of this so remarkable individuality, I have placed *individuality* itself. However discredited from its birth by very indiscreet usage, the word does not frighten me. I am not afraid that any of you will combine in an imaginary brotherhood two sworn enemies, *individualism* and *individuality*. The former is the obstacle and the negation of all society; to the latter society is indebted for all its attractiveness, its life and its reality. We are all at one on this point, that dead members cannot form a living body, and that society can only be worth what we are worth who compose it. None of us deify that brute force of the civilised ages, which is falsely called public opinion. Despot for despot; a man, a Napoleon, is worth as

much as those miasmata which lay hold on the mind, infect the moral world, and are little more than recollections, fears and hopes, under the fair name of ideas. The thought of the individual is not formed, either apart from society or without it; but it is the individual, and not society, that thinks, believes, and loves; and if he borrows from it, as doubtless he does borrow, some of the elements of his thought, he does not borrow his thought itself. In this respect, he ought at once to make use of society and to defend himself against it. He ought even, when he has not succeeded in defending himself, to do what depends on him to regain his conquest over it; and it is one of the glories of Christianity that it has consecrated this important duty in the highest sphere. It has not, by consecrating it, weakened, but rather strengthened society. And if you take the word *society* in the full force of its meaning, you may say that it is with Christianity that it begins, and from Christianity that it takes its rise. All that develops in souls the principle of faith, of duty, of thought, and of liberty—individual things, adds to the strength of society.

I am not afraid, therefore, to place in the rank, and in the first rank, of the traits which render the character of Pascal so eminent, his profound individuality; by which I understand nought else than the gift of being himself, the privilege of having thoughts and feelings of his own, and not living by borrowing in these two respects, as is too often the case with men who otherwise are well constituted. Every man, whether he will or no, has his individuality, but not every man has individuality. A man is, in a passive sense, different from his neighbour, different from all the world; and our defects, in their different degrees,

and their different combinations, render us, alas ! only too individual. I speak of a certain degree of independence or internal activity, which does not permit us to be reduced to simple receptivity, and which, without making us spurn the ideas and the opinions that come to us from without, enables us to react upon them in such sort that they become our property rather than we become theirs. I say *activity*, because, in matters of intellect and morals, to *be* and to *act* are one and the same thing ; and I add, that individuality is in proportion not to the frequent use, but to the intensity, of this activity, or this reaction. Individuality is the foundation of our proper value ; for, in order that we may be anything, it is necessary, first of all, that we *be* ; or, in other words, that our qualities be our own. In this sense, individuality is rare ; and it is no exaggeration to say that most men, instead of dwelling at home, live with others, and are, as it were, to let, in their opinions and their morals, for a longer or a shorter time ; but this difference goes for nothing. Intelligence and development of mind are not sure guarantees of individuality : Pascal did not find it common amongst writers. " Certain authors (says he), speaking of their works, say, *My book, my commentary, my history*, etc. They feel like citizens who have ' a gable on the street,' and who have always the words *my house* in their mouths. They ought rather to say, *Our book, our commentary, our history*, etc., seeing that ordinarily there is more in it of the property of others than of their own."

As for Pascal, he has " a gable on the street," and nothing hinders his saying, *My Thoughts*. His voice is not an echo ; or, if it be an echo, it is that of conscience ;—I mean intellectual as well as moral conscience. Every

mind has probably ideas of its own;<sup>1</sup> but it is not every mind that can penetrate to its own ideas through the successive layers formed of the ideas of others, or of all the world, with which our own are always covered to a certain depth. The matter is then to reach one's self. The sounding-line of this sort of Artesian well is neither logic nor analysis, which may, with respect to certain subjects, lead us to truth, but not to ourselves. The sounding-line, to which I do not seek to give a name, is something more native, and less complicated. It is a certain courage of mind, and perhaps of character, which does not always distinguish the most intelligent or the most learned, and which, though it does not lead us immediately to the truth, is nevertheless one of the most valuable instruments of this research; because, before inquiring, and in order to inquire aright, we must first have found the *I* which is the agent in the research. We are under great obligations to those who have known how to separate and recognise their own voice in the midst of the confused jumble of so many strange voices, in which our own is so easily lost, till it becomes to us the strangest of all.

The education of Pascal came to the aid of his birth, as regards individuality. He was—at least we have grounds for believing that he was—of the number of those men who have been educated in accordance with their nature. Let

<sup>1</sup> Is this perchance what Pascal meant when he said, “In proportion as one has more mind, he finds that there are more men of originality”? It is because with his mind he compels them to be or to show what they are. Descartes had already said, “In the corruption of our morals, there are few people who would wish to say all that they believe; but this also causes that many people do not know themselves: for the act of thought by which one believes a thing being different from that by which he knows that he believes it, there is often the one without the other.”

us add, that the studies to which he devoted the first part of his career, concurred with his nature and his education to preserve his individuality. I know that, at a later period, he professed at least a relative contempt for those studies,—I mean the *abstract* or *objective* sciences. “The knowledge of external things cannot, in time of affliction, compensate to me for ignorance of morals; but the knowledge of morals can always compensate to me for ignorance of external sciences.” He has gone still further;—he has said, on the subject of the study of man, so superior, according to him, to the study of the abstract sciences; “Is it not so, that this is not the knowledge which man ought to have, and that for his happiness it is better for him to be without it?” All this may be true; but it is no hindrance to our believing that Pascal’s exclusive application to mathematics and natural philosophy during his youth was for him a safeguard of individuality. These sciences, I believe, exercise it little, but they do not compromise it. Sciences of another sort—literature, for example—excite and develop it; but they threaten it, because, making the inner man come out from his retreat, they bring him more into contact with the life of all, and oblige him perhaps to receive from them more than he ought. Mathematics have so little of this inconvenience that they would be liable to one quite opposite, if man could be exclusively a mathematician. Pascal, who is entitled to belief on this subject, has not he said somewhere, “He is a good mathematician, one will say; but I have not to do only with mathematics: he would take me for a proposition”? It is a great defect, doubtless, to take men for propositions; but, in short, few men are wholly geometers. Necessity, nature, have taken care of that up to a

certain point. One may be a geometrician and not cease to be a man. One and the same man—you should know it, gentlemen—may be at once a good geometrician and a good poet. But at present we have not to do with the dangers of the abstract sciences, but with one of their advantages : they economise individuality ; and it is thus that the individuality of Pascal was so remarkably preserved.

No one will be surprised at such a man's having protested strenuously against the abuse of *authority* in the matter of science. This is the peculiar subject of the preface which he has prefixed to his *Treatise on a Vacuum*, a preface characteristic at once of the epoch and the author. Authority will always be, in questions that are debated among the learned, more regarded than it ought to be. Still no one will ever plead the cause as Pascal pleaded it ; and why ? Because he has gained it. But it was not gained before he took it in hand ; and his preface was not superfluous. Science was in reality at war with the principle of authority. Liberty of thought, or, if you prefer it, the sovereignty of facts, had need of a defender ; and who fitter for the service than Pascal ? This short treatise reflects him at full length. Never did conviction more resemble an inward feeling ; never were temperament and thought more strictly in accordance. Here he maintains, long before the *Provincials*, the same doctrine which you have seen him defend in the eighteenth of these letters.<sup>1</sup> He is so much the stronger against authority, because he first takes its part, and because nothing, in this legitimate and necessary concession, indicates aught but satisfaction. What we cannot know but by reve-

<sup>1</sup> Still M. Faugére has reason to say that "Pascal always avoided committing his opinion on the system of Copernicus and Galileo ;" for in this

lation, he hands over to revelation ; what falls under the senses, he makes, without any reserve, the province of observation, which is as sovereign in its sphere as is revelation in its. Further, he does not admit that observation and revelation, that is to say, two truths, can be in contradiction, at least continuously or conclusively. Speaking of the ancients, he dissipates what may be called the optical illusion that is so common. "Comparing the whole succession of men, during the course of so many ages, to a single man living always and continually learning," he concludes that "those whom we call ancients were in reality novices in all things, and constituted the infancy of humanity ;" \* which reduces their authority over us to that which infants might have over full-grown men.

When the author of the *Thoughts* engaged in researches of which religious truth was the object, his individuality, far from being held in abeyance, asserted itself more loftily and more bravely. The act of most perfect submission appeared to him rightfully to claim the most perfect liberty. No one, on questions of sovereign importance, ever discarded more peremptorily all party feeling, all preconceived opinions. The more the authority, when Pascal shall have acknowledged it, over his mind and over his life is to be absolute, the more, in his search after that authority, does he discard authority. He retires and shuts himself up within himself.

18th letter he says no more than this : "It was also in vain that you obtained against Galileo a decree of Rome, which condemned his opinion respecting the motion of the earth. That decree will never prove that it remains at rest ; and if we had coincident observations which should prove that it revolves, all mankind together would not prevent its turning, and would not prevent themselves from turning along with it."

\* See Appendix, Note M.

He shuts the gate against all suggestions, all solicitations ; he wishes, for the transaction of this great business, to remain alone with himself. Descartes, in an investigation of the same kind, did not more strictly isolate himself.

Under the most different forms, the appeal to individuality in the matter of religion is repeated very often in the book of the *Thoughts*. " So far (he says, for example) from having heard anything being the rule of your belief, that you ought to believe nothing without putting yourself into a position as if you had never heard it. It is the agreement of yourself with yourself, and the constant voice of your own reason, and not that of others, which ought to make you believe." Does not the following passage say indirectly the same thing ? " Ordinary people have the power of not thinking of what they do not wish to think of. Do not think of the passages of the Messiah, said the Jew to his son. Thus our people often do. Thus false religions keep their ground, and even the true religion keeps its in the esteem of many people. But there are some who have not the power of thus abstaining from thought, and who think so much the more that they are forbidden to do so. These rid themselves of false religions, and even of the true, if they do not find the reasonings in support of them to be sound."

From this point, individuality no longer appears to us as a simple gift, but as a virtue, and cannot be distinguished from love of the truth. If you seek in the life of Pascal for a passion, this is it. He had a passion for truth, or, to speak more exactly, a passion, an imperious necessity for *the true*. Under the name " love of truth " is often designated only the eager desire of knowledge ; or a species of high curiosity. The love of the true is quite another thing ; it may be found

in minds not particularly greedy of knowledge, and contented enough to be ignorant, but whom the false repels and the true ravishes. Pascal is at the head of these noble spirits. Without doubt he loved concrete truth, or truths of every kind ; but the eagerness of thought might have been weakened in him, never the love and the necessity of the true. It is by this, not by a certain indolence of mind or a certain carelessness of heart, that the courage of his thought is explained ; the attentiveness with which, on all subjects, he lends his ear to the lightest whispers of his reason ; the cold tranquillity with which he commits to paper things which any one else would scarcely have confided to himself ; that impartiality of which his editors, friends of truth though they were themselves, did not consider themselves bound to preserve all the traces ; and lastly, those contradictions which they have not wholly effaced, and whose existence can only be explained by the admirable sincerity of the writer. He would have made them disappear in publishing his book. I believe it ; but it would not have been before having resolved them. No one can be false with his reader after having been so true with himself ; no one is a liar by halves. Pascal would not indeed have printed, but still he has written these remarkable words : “ If there be ever a time when we ought to make profession of two contraries, it is when we are reproached for omitting one. Hence the Jesuits and the Jansenists are to blame for concealing them ; but the Jansenists more, for the Jesuits have better made profession of the two.”

What is admired as *profundity* in the book of Pascal, and what is in fact profundity, appears to us due in great part to this courage of thought, or this passionate love of the

true. It has been remarked that the thought of a child is sometimes profound, because simplicity and profundity must meet. Shall we venture to say that, very often, Pascal is profound because he is simple ; or because, like a child (but more meritoriously, since the child's courage is only that of imprudence), he looks objects and his own thoughts in the face, and unhesitatingly follows it wheresoever it lead him. I know very well that it would not lead a less vigorous genius so far ; but how many things of surprising novelty, and of incomparable value, Pascal would not have said, would not have thought, if his love of truth had been less ardent, less imperious !

This passionate love of the true made him hold in contempt everything which, in actual life, overlays with accidental attributes what is the distinguishing attribute of man,—I mean, his quality of manhood. It is this quality that pleases him, and that he seeks before all others ; and he is almost enraged when the accident robs him of the substance,—when the *man*, or the *honest man*, with whom he had to do, disappears under profession, art, or rank. “Man (he says) is full of wants ; he loves only those who can supply them all. I must then have an honest man, who can accommodate himself to all my wants in general.” . . . “One should not be able to say of a man that he is either a mathematician, or a preacher, or eloquent, but that he is an honest man. This universal quality alone pleases me. *Ne quid nimis*, lest a quality should gain the ascendancy and give him its name.” And truly he is right. Every man, in order to be anything, too easily resolves to be only that thing. We are all so many living abstractions ; and in order better to remember that we are artists or men of

letters, men of business or men of state, we forget to be simply men,—the universal quality which alone gives value to our particular qualities. Thus Pascal made the truth of human life consist in uniting all, excluding nothing, being in some sort *universal*. This view may, I suppose, give us the key of a thought which we meet, not without astonishment, in Pascal, and of which, in a certain point of view, we may dispute the accuracy. “Since no one can be universal, and know all that can be known about everything, we should know a little about everything. For it is much better to know something about everything, than everything about one thing. This universality is most desirable.”\*

This passion for the true, or this bravery of mind, explains Pascal’s hatred for everything in language, or in the imitation of objects, that is hyperbolical, inflated, or purely conventional. His bad humour against this vicious style betrays itself in many places. We cannot but perceive it in these words, thrown out with a negligence that increases their force: “To mask nature, and to disguise her. Away with kings, the pope, bishops; we must have august monarch, etc.; not Paris, but the capital of the kingdom.” Faithful to his maxim, that he should speak of all things as an honest man and as to honest men (we should now say humanly, and as to men), he discards the trumpery which invests objects with a false appearance of greatness, and believes that thus he renders good service to study; for, says he, “One of the reasons which most withdraw those who enter upon such studies from the true path which they ought to follow, is the imagination which they take up beforehand that good things are inaccessible,

\* See Appendix, Note N.

calling them *grand, lofty, elevated, sublime*. I would call them *low, common, familiar*. I hate these swelling words. It is not in extraordinary and out-of-the-way things that excellence of whatever kind is found.\* People raise themselves up in order to reach it, and so go the farther from it. More frequently they should lower themselves. The best books are those which the readers think that they could have made themselves. Nature, which alone is good, is altogether familiar and common."

Would you have—I do not say all the rhetoric of Pascal—but the key, or the sum of that rhetoric? In a few words, here it is: "When a natural discourse paints a passion or an effect, we find in ourselves the truth of what we hear, though we did not know that it was in us, so that we are led to love him who makes us feel it. For he has made it appear not to be his, but our own." Behold in what, according to Pascal, consists that eloquence of which he has said, with off-hand familiarity, "that it laughs at eloquence." It consists in giving us the consciousness of our own feelings and our own thoughts. Such is the effect of a *natural discourse*,—a sort of mirror in which we have only to look at ourselves. Away, then, with all artifices! The only point is to be *true*; and depth, pathos, sublimity, are but different degrees and different forms of the true.

Let any one read the thoughts of Pascal on eloquence and on style: he will see that the rhetoric of this great man was almost a moral thing. The love of the true is the foundation and the spirit of it. There is not a precept in these thoughts which does not breathe disdain of conventional beauties and the artifices of language, I would say

\* See Appendix, Note O.

even the most innocent. Who has not remarked this expression, which we should look for in vain in all the rhetoricians? "When we find words repeated in a discourse, and on trying to correct them we find them so suitable that we should spoil the discourse by altering them, we should leave them as they are. It is a mark and a part for envy, which is blind, and does not know that this repetition is no fault in such a place; for there is no general rule." Perhaps you may have noticed that Pascal exemplifies the rule in stating it (by the repetition of the word *find*).

When it has been intended to praise the style of Pascal, there has been found but one eulogy; when it has been intended to characterise it, there has been found but one word. But this eulogy, this word, so much the more significant because it is accompanied by no other, distinguishes that of Pascal amongst all styles. It is a *true* style. All statements over and above this are but variations of this simple word; but M. Faugére has without doubt fallen upon one of the happiest of these variations when he has spoken of this style as "simple,—so identified with the soul of the writer, that it is but the thought itself, adorned with its chaste nudity like an antique statue."<sup>1</sup> But it is not yet time to speak of Pascal's style; we wish, at present, only to see in it the unquestionable impress of one of the distinctive qualities of his character.

A trait which is closely connected with that which I have just pointed out is the place, let us rather say the rank, which

<sup>1</sup> It appears to me that Pascal has told us the secret of his eloquence in the following passage:—"Things are often written which can only be proved by obliging every one to reflect upon himself, and to find the truth of what is spoken. The force of the proofs of what I say consists in this."

*thought* occupies in the existence of Pascal. Others may have thought as much as he. But I doubt whether, in the case of any one, thought has been mingled in so strong a proportion with the other elements of which the whole of human life is composed. Assuredly we shall not say of him what has been said, justly or unjustly, of the greatest character of the nineteenth century,

“From hate and love exempt, he lived to think.”

A great intensity of intellectual life is not incompatible with depth of the affections. So at least judged Pascal; for if he has said that “thought makes the greatness of man,” he has said also that “to think well is the beginning of morality.” Even before his conversion, Pascal was not all thought, and still less after it; for it is then that he solemnly distinguishes three orders of greatness, among which intellectual greatness holds only the second rank; and it is then also that he utters this remarkable saying: “We make an idol even of truth; for truth, apart from love, is not God. It is His image, and an idol which ought not to be loved or worshipped.” But if Pascal, in this respect, was not all thought, we might almost say that he was in another sense, so little did he live the life of the senses. It appears that he hardly knew, but by suffering, that nature had provided or embarrassed him with a body. Even in the labour of thought he borrowed but the least possible from the senses, or from those objects with which the senses bring us into communication. It is of things directly, never of the images of things, almost never of things by their images, that his mind lays hold. He agitates the world of phenomena by his thought; he never permits the world of phenomena to agitate, still less to alter, his thought.

I am not now giving account of a system, but indicating a particular constitution. Still the constitution becomes a system in many parts of Pascal's book. The discourse on *the Passions of Love* is a curious instance of it. No one now-a-days will be able without surprise to hear him say, "that in proportion as a man has more mind, the passions are greater; that purity of mind causes purity of passion; and that love, consisting only in an attachment of the thought, ought certainly to be the same for all the world." After these quotations, on which I shall make no comment, I shall only add that Pascal has led me to conceive, or at least to admit, that the thought has its passions as well as the soul and the body. The thought of Pascal is impassioned, not in virtue of this or that particular object which pre-occupies it, but *as thought*. Or, if you will, he attaches to pure thought the same kind and the same degree of interest that the generality of men attach to quite other objects. His thought is not only a distinct perception, but a lively feeling, of the truth. It suffers and enjoys, it loves and hates, as the heart might do. It loves the truth, and it loves also itself. It has, on its own account, vehement desires and immense ambitions; and what Pascal has somewhere said of the human mind, he might have said still more justly of his own: "There are no limits in things; the laws would put limits to them, but the mind cannot suffer it."

The limits or barriers which the thought of Pascal has recognised are those of a lofty reason, of which he has, without meaning it, described to us the two excellent characteristics. Read his *Discourse on the Passions of Love*, and his *Treatise on the Geometric Mind*; and you will learn that there are two kinds of mind, the geometric mind, and the

subtle mind ; that is to say, in more modern language, analysis on the one hand, and on the other that rapid and sure synthesis, which is probably nothing else than exquisite good sense. "The former (says Pascal) has its views slow, hard, and inflexible ; but the latter has a suppleness of thought which it applies at once to the several amiable qualities of what it loves." And the author adds : "When a man has both these minds together, what pleasure love gives him !" A little farther on these two sorts of mind are still better distinguished in the following words :—

"The geometricians being accustomed to the simple and large principles of geometry, and only to reason after having seen and handled their principles, they lose themselves in matters of subtlety, where the principles cannot be thus handled. They are with difficulty seen ; they are felt rather than seen. The thing must be seen all at once with a single look, and not by progressive reasoning, at least to a certain degree. And thus it is rare that geometricians are subtle, or that subtle persons are geometricians. . . . But false minds are never either the one or the other."

"The judgment is that to which sentiment belongs, as the sciences belong to the mind. Subtlety is the part of the judgment, geometry is that of the mind."

Athwart the light clouds of an obsolete nomenclature, I have no doubt that you have caught the meaning of Pascal ; and I shall be understood when I say, that what in my eyes completes the characterisation of this eminent mind, is the union, in the most just proportions, of the geometric and the subtle mind. They may be united without difficulty in an ordinary intellect ; but what is rare is, that the one of them, carried to the highest degree, does not injure the

other, and permits it even to raise itself to an equal height. A mind eminently geometric, and as subtle as it is geometric, is a spectacle before which it is worth while to bow. Pascal exhibits to us this fine phenomenon in his own person. You will not, of course, ask me to furnish you with the proof of this. You will seek it yourselves in the book of the *Thoughts*; and I am much mistaken if this happy and rare temperament do not seem to you as remarkable as it does to me.

Among the elements from the combination of which the intellectual character of Pascal results, ought we to reckon poetry? Though Pascal had blasphemed against it, as has been pretended, but as I do not believe, it would not follow from that, that he might not have been a poet. He might have been one, like some others, in spite of himself. In fact, there is poetry in the book of *Thoughts*; and perhaps it is not going far beyond the limits of the truth to say that some passages in the book of *Thoughts* are stanzas of a Christian Byron. But, in general, it is Pascal himself that is the poetry of his book. Whatever there is of vehemence in his thought, of sovereignty in his contempts, of tragedy, shall we venture to say, in the position which he occupies before us as an individual and as a man, that is the poetry of Pascal. It is there, rather than in his thought, where the heaping up of truth prevents the production of some of the effects of poetry. Compare Bossuet and Pascal on the same subjects. You will then know what the sublimest poetry can do, and what extreme truthfulness. But, in short, Bossuet is a poet, and Pascal is not. Is it possible, without being one, or not wishing to be one, to comprehend the whole of human life, or, so to speak, to be a complete man? Is it

not essential that the *honest man* (we use here the language of Pascal himself) should be a poet to a certain point, and in some manner? Poetry lives by associations of ideas, by means of which it greatly modifies life; but Pascal associated ideas according to stricter laws, and did not willingly lend himself to those which imagination has instituted in her kingdom. Still there are always some points through which passion holds communion with the imagination. Passion cannot always abstain from figures; and thus from time to time, drawing Pascal into the land of figures, it makes him poetical.

Must we still add scepticism to the primitive elements which make up the intellectual character of the *Thoughts*? To put such a question is, at the same time, to define scepticism. It is to designate by this term something which is to the mind what irresolution is to the character, a sort of incapacity of forming a conclusion, a taste for indefinite temporising, which considers contradictory arguments without striking the balance between them—in one word, a weakness or indolence of intellect. All this was never applicable to Pascal at any period of his life. Pascal was not one of those who are born sceptics, if it be true that any are born such. He was not a sceptic, but he doubted. It may be asked whether the constant reading of Montaigne and Charron did not lead him into this melancholy path. Perhaps he submitted to their influence; perhaps, also, he met rather than followed them. His scepticism, if it must be so called, belongs to himself; and this scepticism is not with him a matter of humour, but of reflection. It was with a free judgment, the result of reasoning, that he did not believe in the *morality of the mind*—(recall this expression, which we

have already remarked)—but only in the *morality of the judgment*, that is to say, after all, of the heart. And by the term *morality* here we must understand the whole moral world, the whole moral order, all that is not within the province of calculation, and whose principles cannot be discovered by the way of observation. I am inclined to think that he was sceptical in this respect, that is to say, that, in a certain sense, he never believed in philosophy. This sally, which occurs at the end of a singular enough passage on Descartes, expresses his conviction, and, we believe, his deliberate conviction :—“And though all this were true, we do not consider that philosophy is worth an hour’s labour.” He was persuaded that metaphysical truths escape our reason (understand, discursive reason), and that it belongs to the heart, if not immediately to reveal them to us, at least to place us at the entrance of the road that leads towards these truths. He believed this so much the more that he found in his own heart a very distinct and lively answer to questions of this class ; and doubtless he would willingly have applied to this new road what he has somewhere said of rivers : “Rivers are travelling roads, which carry us where we wish to go.” I need not add, gentlemen, that he regarded as being within the province of the reason all that is historical in the apologetics of Christianity. What he denied always, at least I believe so, is the metaphysical proof of metaphysical truths. If, in his indignation against the rashnesses and the arrogance of human reason, he went beyond his own system, we need not be too much astonished at this proceeding on the part of an ardent genius ; and when we hear him exclaim, in his conversation with M. de Saci, “I confess to you, sir, that I cannot see without joy

in this author (Montaigne) haughty reason foiled with its own weapons, and I should love with my whole heart the minister of so great a vengeance ;”—when Pascal, I say, speaks thus, we feel that passion is mixed with his conviction, and we foresee some excess. But the time for our inquiring more exactly into this matter is not yet come.

We must not be afraid to confess that erudition, and still more a regard for erudition, was wanting in Pascal ; and this defect is apparent in his writings. If everything could be reasoned out, it would matter little, for Pascal would have reasoned out everything ; but history is not matter of reasoning, and history would have rectified or modified more than one of his judgments. If this strong thinker had been learned, what place would be high enough for him among the geniuses that have enlightened humanity ? If, in spite of this, there is no place higher than his own, it must yet be allowed that Pascal, more than any one else, had need to read. Such a man would have run little risk by reading more than he did. And of all the reproaches that have been cast upon him—I speak of reproaches with some foundation—he would perhaps never have incurred any one, if his erudition had equalled his genius. It appears that Pascal had not read much except Montaigne. He was what one of the ancients energetically calls *a man of one book*. Perhaps it would have been better that he had read nothing at all ; for, to read only one book is very often, however strong a man be, to put himself at the mercy of a book.

Shall we now attempt to penetrate further into the soul of Pascal ? Shall we pass from the domain of the intellect, properly so called, into the domain of the affections ? It will not be without some apprehension. This second *I* is

still more difficult to fathom than the other. I have not been able to discover in Pascal any trace of vanity, or even of self-love, in the ordinary sense of the word ; but a certain haughtiness, in some sort impersonal, the encounter with which was probably not more agreeable to those who were subjected to it, than if personality had played a more important part in it. It was not from the height of his individual importance, but, so to speak, from the height of his convictions and of truth, that Pascal overwhelmed men's minds ; but he did overwhelm them. He was rather formed, it appears to me, to rule and to lead, than to please. I am glad to recollect, on this occasion, a remarkable passage from his treatise on the Art of Persuasion. “The manner (or the art) of being agreeable is incomparably more difficult, more subtile, more useful, and more admirable (than the art of demonstrating). If I do not treat of it, it is because I am not capable of doing so ; and I feel myself so incompetent, that I believe the thing to be absolutely impossible. Not but that I believe that there are as certain rules to please as to prove, and that one who should perfectly know and practise them, would as surely succeed in making himself beloved by kings, and all sorts of persons, as in demonstrating the elements of geometry ; but I suppose—and it is perhaps my weakness that makes me think so—that it is impossible to attain this ‘power.’” I do not tell you, gentlemen, to believe Pascal here on his word ; but I cannot help thinking that in this passage he has known and judged himself accurately. No doubt he knew how to inspire a lively and profound sympathy for his ideas ; but, taking him as he is, and in the whole of the sphere in which his strength is put forth, he certainly exercised more of power than of attraction.

Some readers have been indignant at this. They had perhaps reasons for their indignation which they did not acknowledge. Voltaire gave no account, but we give account for him, of the feeling which made him write thus : “Pascal, a premature genius, wished to make use of the superiority of this genius as kings make use of their power : he thought to subject all, and to humble all, *by force*. What has most revolted certain readers in the *Thoughts*, is the despotic and contemptuous air with which he begins. He should not have begun without having reason on his side.” In fact, no one then knew how or where Pascal had begun ; we do not know it with perfect certainty even now. But he goes on nearly as he begins, and the readers of whom Voltaire speaks would find almost everywhere what would revolt them. But call it authority, ascendant, or the *despotic air* with which Voltaire is shocked, you come to the conclusion, with me, that while others gain us insensibly, Pascal subdues us.

As for what are commonly called *passions*, it is difficult to discover a trace of them in the career or in the writings of Pascal. And yet he was impassioned ; and it is on this that the incomparable power of his style mainly depends. But his passions, as I have said already, are intellectual passions, or passions of the mind. I believe that the particular affections had little to do in his life. I do not take advantage, so to speak, of what he may have said or thought after his conversion. If I brought in proof what he said of marriage, which he calls “the most dangerous and the lowest condition of Christianity ;”—if I quoted these words, “We did not lose my father at the moment of his death ; we lost him, so to speak, when he entered into the Church by baptism,”—

you would bring against me, and with reason, the dates, and the influence of a system or of a doctrine, which ought not to be confounded with the natural complexion of this extraordinary soul. But I take him before his conversion, and apart from all system. And then I find a soul capable certainly of particular attachments, but drawn higher by its nature, and rather formed for general affections. We find, for all must be told, some traces of violence at some periods of Pascal's life ; and it would appear also, that in family affairs he showed himself too exclusively the geometrician, and took for justice the *summum jus* which is far apart from it. He did not need to be tender in order to control himself ; but more tenderness of heart would certainly have rendered him more just. Our justice is not often aught else ; and, after all, it is better that the *deficit* be supplied by tenderness than by fear. Be this as it may, the requirements of Pascal in the matter of particular attachments, do not seem to have been very lively. His friendships took their birth in the domain of the loftiest sympathies. They were philosophical or religious in their origin, as in their character. If he was sufficiently sociable, he was above all human ; and it is in this general affection that all the tenderness of his soul is displayed. A word thrown out, as by chance, among his thoughts on eloquence and style, strikes me in this connection : "It is proper to please those who have human and tender feelings." Seek for this rule in the books on rhetoric and poetry which you may know ; no one has been aware of it ; and more than one maxim taught by literary men implies precisely the opposite of Pascal's rule. Perhaps you will not attach less value to this other thought, as a revelation of Pascal's character : "Is it necessary to

kill in order that there may be none wicked? This is to make two instead of one." I might further quote some fine sayings on tolerance; but here, unless I am much mistaken, it is the Christian that speaks, and at present we have not to do with the Christian.

But I will venture to repeat it. Pascal was formed to love on a large scale; and the general affections alone were capable of filling his heart. Perhaps his profoundly intellectual nature would have it so. There is, in fact, something intellectual in general affections, which is not in particular attachments. We are not afraid of being accused of slighting grace, and attributing too much to nature, if we add that the character of Pascal demanded what his conversion gave him,—we mean a God to love. Whatever was in him of the impassioned, which, till then, had scarcely aught but ideas to satisfy it, found the means of satisfaction in God; for he there found at once a *being* and *truth*. The piety of Pascal has all the character of a passion. It was not one only, or even several of his internal necessities that were ministered to by this almost unexpected meeting with a God; it was all the necessities at once that man can admit, and that are honourable to him. Necessities or faculties, it matters not; for faculties are necessities. It is thus, with all his faculties, his mighty faculties, as with immense arms, that Pascal embraces the God that is presented to him. He embraces Him with the intellect, as with the heart, as with love of himself, without any distinction; because all this, in the joy of the new birth, is more intimately united than light and heat can be in a ray of the sun. Yet it is of all these joys at once that the sublime rapture is composed, which breaks out in the singular fragment of which so much has

been said, the *mystic amulet* which an infidel philosopher<sup>1</sup> had to make known to the Christian world.

“There are (says the excellent writer who, by a new edition of the *Thoughts*, has linked his name inseparably with the illustrious name of Pascal)—there are decisive hours in which a man feels the germ of a new vocation burst out in him ; a world all at once opens to his mind, and seized with a passion, imperious as the very voice of God, he takes upon his conscience the engagement to pursue the work which is thenceforth to be the end of his life. Thus St Augustine is led by the voice from on high, which subdues him and leads him captive. Thus Pascal, weary of the dissipations of the world, resolves to quit them, and in a vigil of anguish and of ecstasy, he finds himself suddenly and for ever bound to religion.

“The apostle of reason, who exalted good sense to the dignity of a philosophic method, Descartes, had not he also his hour of lyric enthusiasm ?”

Heaven itself, we doubt not, had marked this supreme moment in the career of Pascal, and God, in secret, assisted at this vigil of arms. But I wish here to remark only one thing. Man, a relative and dependent creature, is not complete but by passion. But with some, passion is asleep till it be wakened by meeting with its object ; with others, passion, long awake, active, unquiet, incapable of destruction, impatiently waits, and ardently seeks, for its object. Pascal is of the latter number. It may be said that with him passion, kept above vulgar objects by the intellectual character which was peculiar to him, found before it, at this height, only the void or nonentity. It darted across these

<sup>1</sup> Condorcet.

desolate spaces, *inania regna*, and stopped, or rather fixed-itself, in religion. Religion was thenceforth the passion of Pascal. The religion of Pascal was impassioned ; and therefore communicative and captivating. His logic, admirable as it was, became only more strict and more pointed ; but it tempered itself also in passion ; and these two attributes, each carried to the utmost conceivable extent, make up the inimitable character of the book of *Thoughts*.

One expression might have taken the place of this long and imperfect analysis. Read, I might have said to you, the writings in which M. Sainte-Beuve and Dr Reuchlin have, with so much erudition, sincerity, and subtlety, interrogated the documents relative to our Pascal. What secrets has not the author of *Port-Royal* surprised, in his prolonged and familiar intercourse with an epoch which has refused nothing to a curiosity so sagacious ! But if I come too late for this subject, I come too late for all subjects ; and I should only have to cite my authorities before you, or make them occupy my chair in my stead. I have no right to do so ; and if I had, I should not use it. Without saying aught of the necessity of oral instruction, a course of lectures collects what is scattered, abridges, resumes, and concludes ; and it is always new if it express impressions truly personal ; for in every one of the souls which receive it, the truth becomes new. Where there is necessity there cannot be audacity ; and the part of an echo, even a living and sympathising echo, cannot be deemed presumptuous.

## IV.

## ON THE THOUGHTS OF PASCAL.

<sup>b</sup> IN studying the *Thoughts* of Pascal, we must not take up the idea of a formal apology. In its actual state, the volume is a long and sublime *aside*,—a drama in which but one actor is on the stage, but which has no want of *situations*. No book is more subjective, and at the same time less egotistic. It is a book of confessions;—not the confessions of an Augustine; but the successive confessions of a penitent in thought, who makes known his agitations even from the bosom of his agitations, for the echo of the internal tumult is prolonged in his recollection, and even in his soul.

We have already said, that this book could not have appeared in the state in which we now have it. The style of it would have been modified, the plan also, even the thought is not settled. Pascal appears not to have described the whole of his orbit. It is no rare thing to find oscillations, contradictions in the *Thoughts*. The book bears a problematic character. It is a true Egyptian monument, on which many of the hieroglyphics are yet to be deciphered, and in which letters have sometimes been taken for words. In endeavouring to give an account of it, we shall not be able to follow the order of the subjects except in a general way, ~~and~~ without laying hold of particulars.

<sup>wl</sup> The fundamental idea of this apology is to set out from man <sup>l</sup> in order to come to God. We might set out from God

to come to man ; taking the Christian religion as a fact, and explaining it, as many others have undertaken to do. But Pascal's nature, his experiences, the history of his soul, required of him another method. He was, as it were, instinctively impelled to adopt that which he has chosen : he said to himself that religion is either the complement or the reparation of human nature. The object of religion, therefore, is man : it is a relief to his misery. Let us inquire, with Pascal, if this misery is real, if this relief is necessary. Supposing his readers to be men who systematically do not wish for information about religion, he naturally speaks of God in name of humanity.

From this plan there must result something of the dramatic. The design is to compel an indifferent public to take interest in the subject. He throws them into an agony, in order to reveal to them the remedy.

Pascal addresses himself to atheists. In the following century he would not have done so. He would not have thought it necessary. There were then infidels, deists, but not atheists. In Pascal's time, the term was appropriate. There were, on one side, men attached to the religion of their country, and on the other, atheists in the strict sense. Do you figure to yourselves the character of minds at the period when Pascal appeared ? The disposition of men's minds is distinctly shown in the literature of the time. The affection in manners, the inflated nobility of Balzac, the heroes of Corneille, still more his heroines, Emilie, Cleopatra, Viriate, indicate something excessive, hyperbolical, unnatural, if not in life, at least in ideas and character. Those moral and intellectual shadings, which were afterwards exhibited, did not yet exist ; there were only de-

cided colours. This was reproduced in all departments. In religion, you shall see men zealous, either from prejudice or from conviction ; and alongside of them scoffers, libertines (as they were called in the eighteenth century), practical rather than speculative atheists. There is no mean. It was with these men that Pascal had to deal. His book is directed against them, but not in a spirit of hatred or bitterness.

“ To commence (says he) with a lamentation for unbelievers. They are sufficiently miserable by their condition. It would not be proper to offend them, unless for the purpose of benefiting them ; but this hurts them.” (II. 387.)

“ To lament for atheists who are inquiring ; for are they not sufficiently unhappy ? To anathematise those who boast of their atheism.” (II. 19.)

From the outset, he attacks them, but in a grave manner. In an admirable page, he paints, with unparalleled vivacity, the indifferent man.

“ What matter for boasting is there in finding oneself in impenetrable darkness ; and how can it be that such reasoning as this should go on in the mind of a reasonable man ?

“ I know not who has sent me into the world, nor what the world is, nor what I myself am. I am in a terrible ignorance of all things. I know not what my body is, or my senses, or my soul, or that part of me which thinks what I say, which reflects on everything and on itself, and which knows itself no more than the rest. I see those frightful spaces of the universe which enclose me, and I find myself attached to a corner of this vast extent, without knowing why I am placed here rather than elsewhere, or why the little time which is given me to live is allotted to me at this

point rather than any other of the eternity which has gone before, or of that which is to follow.

“I see only infinities on all sides, which encompass me as an atom, and as a shadow which endures but an instant and never returns.

“All that I know is that I must soon die; but what I know least of all is this death which I cannot escape.

“As I know not whence I come, so neither know I whither I go. I only know that on leaving this world, I fall for ever either into nothingness, or into the hands of an angry God, without knowing whether of these two conditions is to be my lot for eternity. Behold my state, full of misery, of weakness, of darkness! And from all this I conclude that I am to pass all the days of my life without caring to inquire what is to befall me. Perhaps I might find some enlightenment in my doubts, but I will not take the trouble, or lift my foot to seek it. And then, treating with contempt those who shall burden themselves with this care, I shall go, without foresight and without fear, to try so great an issue, and allow myself to be led softly to death, in uncertainty of the eternity of my future condition.” (II. 9, 10.)

The principle of this conduct appears to him so contrary to reason, that he thinks there is affectation in it.

“There must be a strange overturn in the nature of man ere he can boast of being in this state, in which it seems incredible that a single person should be. Still, experience shows it me in so great a number, that it would be surprising, if we did not know that most of those who take part in it counterfeit, and are not such in reality. They are people who have heard that the fine manners of the world consist in thus acting the extravagant. It is what they call shaking

off the yoke, and they try to imitate it. But it would not be difficult to make them understand how much they are at fault in seeking for esteem by such means. This is not the way to acquire it, even among people of the world, who judge soundly of things, and who know that the only way to succeed is to appear honest, faithful, judicious, and capable of serving one's friend; since men naturally love only what may be useful to them. But what advantage is it for us to be told, by a man who says that he has shaken off the yoke, that he does not believe that there is a God who watches over his actions, that he considers himself as the sole master of his conduct, and that he has only to render account to himself? Does he expect thereby to induce us to put confidence in him, and to expect from him consolations, counsels, and aid in all the necessities of life? Do they imagine that they give us joy when they tell us that they hold that our soul is but a little wind and smoke, and when they tell us this with a voice of bravery and satisfaction? Is it a thing to be told with gaiety? Is it not, on the contrary, a thing to be told sadly, as indeed the saddest thing in the world?" (II. 11, 12.)

He then concludes with these words:—

"There are only two sorts of persons who can be called reasonable: either those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, or those who seek Him with all their heart because they know Him not." (II. 13.)

"Those who seek Him mourning," as he says elsewhere. And this is what he does himself; he seeks mourning with them and for them. His book is a long mourning. Let us make, with him, an inspection of intellectual and moral man

The book is divided into two parts, of which the first

treats of the misery of man without God, or until he has found God ; the second, of the happiness of man with God.

A simple plan ; but immensely great. Pascal seems to experience a rude pleasure in looking at the former part.

The misery of man is composed of three miseries,—of three deep and unsatisfied wants : the want of truth, the want of happiness, the want of righteousness, are always unsatisfied. Or, rather, it is a threefold truth of which he is deprived. Three truths are lost since the fall, or truth under three modes ; for truth is not only the correspondence of an idea with a fact, but also the correspondence of a fact with an idea. “Is there not (says Pascal himself) a substantial truth, seeing so many true things, which are not the truth itself?” (II. 164.) Happiness, under this aspect, is also truth.

Relatively to *truth* in itself, or rather to the *faculty of knowing*, Pascal declares that “man is only a subject full of error, natural and ineffaceable without grace. Nothing shows him the truth. Everything misleads him.” Reason shall have its turn ; but Pascal begins by correcting it, and attends to various circumstances which prevent our discovering the truth. First, imagination, or *images*,—then our sensibility, our taste, our desire, all concur to deceive us. Images deceive us, but we are willing to be deceived by them.\* The external world is all founded on these deceptions.

“Our magistrates (says Pascal) well know this mystery. Their scarlet robes, their ermines, with which they deck themselves out like furred cats, the palaces in which they sit in judgment, their *fleurs-de-lis*—all these august

\* See Appendix, Note P.

paraphernalia were very necessary ; and if physicians, in not cloaks and mules, and doctors had not had square caps and large robes with four folds, they would never have duped the world, which cannot resist so authentic a display. . . . If they had real justice, if physicians had the true art of healing, they would have no need of square caps. The majesty of the sciences would be sufficiently venerable of itself. . . . We cannot even see an advocate in his gown, and his cap on his head, without an advantageous opinion of his sufficiency." (II. 50-52.)

In like manner, as imagination prejudices us, novelty equally surprises us. Sickesses, interest, accidental distractions, still obscure our understandings.

"The mind of this sovereign judge of the world is not so independent but that he is liable to be troubled by the first hubbub that is made around him. It does not need the noise of a cannon to interrupt his thoughts ; the click of a weather-cock or a pulley is enough. Do not be astonished if he do not reason well at present, a fly is buzzing in his ears ! This is enough to incapacitate him for good counsel." (II. 53, 54.)

Of all the enemies of truth, no one is more noticeable than self-love.

"This misfortune (of not understanding the truth) is doubtless greater and more usual in greater fortunes, but the least are not exempt from it, because there is always some interest in attracting the love of men. Thus human life is only a perpetual illusion ; they do nothing but deceive and flatter one another. . . . The union that subsists between men is only founded upon this mutual deception." (II. 60.)

treats which is the chapter entitled, *Deceptive Influences*.  
four In another chapter (The *Disproportion of Man* ;—Pascal had at first entitled it *Incapacity*), he treats of the disproportion of man with the universe, of the despair which seizes him in face of the two infinites, the one above and the other below him ; all destroys him, and throws him into the state which Pascal calls *incapacity of knowing*.

“ Let him once consider nature seriously and at leisure ; let him also look at himself, and let him judge if he has any proportion with it. . . . Let man then contemplate the whole of nature in its lofty and full majesty ; let him withdraw his view from the base objects which surround him ; let him look upon that brilliant light, set as an eternal lamp to enlighten the universe ; let the earth appear to him as a point, in comparison with the vast orbit described by this heavenly body ; and let him be confounded by the consideration that this vast orbit itself is but a minute point with respect to that embraced by that of the stars which revolve in the firmament. But though our sight stops there, let imagination go further. It will weary itself with conceiving sooner than nature will be weary of furnishing matter for conception. All this visible world is but an imperceptible line on the ample bosom of nature. No idea approaches it. We do well to elevate our conceptions beyond imaginable spaces. We give birth only to atoms, in comparison with the reality of things. It is an infinite sphere, of which the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. In short, it is the greatest sensible characteristic of the omnipotence of God, that our imagination loses itself in this thought.\*

\* See Appendix, Note Q.

“Let man, returning to himself, consider what he is, in comparison with what is ; let him regard himself as wandering in this remote region of nature ; and from this small prison-house in which he is lodged—I mean the universe—let him learn to estimate the earth, its kingdoms, its towns, and himself, at their proper price. . . .

“But, to present to him another prodigy equally astonishing, let him examine the most delicate things in what he knows. Let a mite show him, in the smallness of its body, parts incomparably smaller,—legs with their joints, veins in those legs, blood in those veins, humours in that blood, drops in those humours, vapours in those drops. Let him, still dividing these last things, exhaust his powers in these conceptions, and let the last object to which he can arrive be still that of our discourse. Perhaps he will think that here is the extreme littleness of nature. I wish to show him a new abyss within it. I wish to paint to him not only the visible universe, but the conceivable immensity of nature within the circuit of this fraction of an atom. Let him see there an infinite number of universes, each one of which has its firmament, its planets, its earth, in the same proportion as the visible world ; in this earth animals, and lastly mites, in which he will find what he found in the first ; and finding still the same thing in the others, without end and without rest, let him lose himself in these marvels, as astonishing in their littleness as the others by their extent. . . .

“Whoever will consider himself in this way, will be frightened at himself, and regarding himself as sustained in the group which nature has assigned to him between the two abysses of the infinite and nothingness, he will tremble at the sight of these marvels ; and I believe that his curi-

osity changing into admiration, he will be more disposed to contemplate them in silence than to investigate them with presumption.

“For, in short, what is man in nature? A nothing with respect to the infinite, a whole with respect to nothing; a mean between nothing and all. Infinitely withdrawn from the comprehension of the extremes, the end of things and their beginning are irrecoverably hidden in an impenetrable secret, equally incapable of seeing the nothing from which he has been derived, and the infinite in which he is engulfed. What we have of being deprives us of the knowledge of the first principles, which are produced from nothing, and the littleness of our being conceals from us the infinite. . . .

“Behold our true being. It renders us equally incapable of certain knowledge and of absolute ignorance.” (II. 63-71.)

Moreover, our knowledge is relative; we cannot know the whole without knowing the parts, nor the parts without the whole; whence it follows that we know neither the one nor the other. In like manner, as we are embarrassed between the two infinites, we are embarrassed between the two worlds of mind and of body. We continually mingle and confound them. “We are composed (says Pascal) of two natures, opposite and diverse, soul and body” (II. 73). We occupy the middle place between two worlds, pure matter and pure spirit. “Instead of receiving the ideas of these things in their purity, we taint them with our own qualities, and impress our composite being on all the simple things that we contemplate.” (II. 74.)\*

From all this Pascal concludes our incapacity of know-

\* See Appendix, Note R.

ledge ; and he adds the more delicate consideration, that the despair of being able to discover the infinite is not within the reach of every one.

As to the unsatisfied craving for happiness, we must have a right understanding as to the meaning of the term. There are two sorts of happiness : one disinterested, the other selfish ; one in the soul, the other in outward objects. Pascal makes little account of objective happiness. He is a pessimist ; but we are not to seek in his pessimism for a catalogue of our evils. The happiness that he seeks for must spread itself from within outwards ; he lays hold of it in the soul, and attaches himself to it with a love wholly intellectual. In a word, it is, for him, contentment that is in question. In this sense, happiness is a part of order, and its absence in man is, in Pascal's eyes, a new proof of the disorder of his condition. He applies himself first to describe our disquietude. In every condition, happy or unhappy, man is unquiet. Pascal thence explains the necessity we have for agitation in order to withdraw us from ourselves. This is the object of the chapter entitled, *Diversion*.

“ When I have sometimes set myself to consider the different agitations of men, and the perils and the pains to which they expose themselves in the court, in war, whence arise so many complaints, passions, rash and often wicked enterprises, I have often said that all the misery of man arises from one source, which is, that he cannot remain at rest in a room. . . . But when I have thought more closely, and after having found the *cause* of all our misfortunes, I have wished to discover the *reason* of them, I have found that there is a very effective one, which consists in the natural misfortune of our weak and mortal condition, which is so miserable that

nothing can console us when we think closely of it. . . . Hence it comes that men so much love noise and bustle. Hence it comes that imprisonment is so horrible a punishment ; hence it comes that the pleasure of solitude is a thing incomprehensible. And, lastly, it is the greatest subject of congratulation in the condition of kings, that men are continually trying to divert them, and to procure for them all sorts of pleasures.

“They have a secret instinct which leads them to seek for diversion and occupation from without, which springs from the feeling of their continual miseries ; and they have another secret instinct, which remains from the greatness of our first nature, which makes them know that happiness is, in fact, only in rest, and not in tumult ; and from these two contrary instincts, there is formed in them a confused project, which is concealed from their view in the depth of their soul, which leads them to make for rest by agitation, and always to represent to themselves that the satisfaction which they have not will come to them, if, on surmounting some difficulties which they encounter, they can thereby open to themselves the gate of repose. Thus the whole of life glides away. We seek for rest by combating certain obstacles ; and if we surmount them, rest becomes intolerable. For we think either of the miseries which we have, or of those which threaten us. And even if we should see ourselves sufficiently sheltered on all sides, still *ennui*, with or without reason, would not leave off springing from the bottom of the heart, where it has its natural roots, and filling the mind with its poison (II. 31-35). If man were happy, he would be so much the more so as he was the less diverted, as the saints and God.”

“The only thing that consoles us in our miseries is diversion, and yet it is the greatest of our miseries.” (II. 40.)

Pascal then occupies himself with objective happiness, that which comes to us from without, and from circumstances. Men have not even the idea of the true good, though they have an implacable and inextinguishable craving for it. All that the wisest men have had a glimpse of in this respect is of very little consequence.

“All men seek to be happy ; that is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they are all aiming at this end. What makes some go to war and others not, is the same desire in both, accompanied by different views. The wish never makes the least step save towards this object. It is the motive of all the actions of all men, down even to those who go to hang themselves.

“And yet, throughout so great a number of years, no one without the faith has ever attained that point at which all are continually aiming. All bewail themselves, princes and subjects, nobles and tradesmen, old and young, strong and weak, learned and ignorant, healthy and sick, men of all countries and of all times, of all ages and of all conditions.

“An experience so long, so continual, and so uniform, might well have convinced us of our inability to attain to good by our own efforts ; but example does not teach us. It is never so perfectly alike but there is some slight difference ; and hence we expect that our hope shall not be disappointed on the present, as it has been on previous occasions. And thus, the present never satisfying us, experience lures us on, and leads us from misery to misery, even till death, which is an eternal accumulation of it.” (II. 121-122.)

“Others have considered that it is necessary that the universal good which all men desire, shall not consist in any of the particular things which can only be possessed by a single individual, and which being divided afflict their possessor more, by the want of that part which he has not, than they content him by the enjoyment of that which falls to his share. They have understood that the true good must be such that all might possess it at once without diminution and without envy, and that no one should lose it against his will” (II. 123).

Justice, that is to say, truth in society, is the third requirement which man finds within himself, and which does not obtain satisfaction. The word is there, and by its presence attests the existence of the thing; but man stops at this abstract notion of it, which remains, so to speak, suspended in the air, and never alights. For, if we know what justice is, we know no one who is just. The ideas of the just and the unjust vary with times and places. “A meridian (on this subject) decides upon the truth; in a few years of possession, the fundamental laws change. Right has its epochs. The entrance of Saturn into Leo marks to us the origin of this or that crime. Pleasant justice, which a river bounds! Truth on this side the Pyrenees, error on the other!” (II. 126.)

This extreme diversity puts it out of the author’s power to admit a natural knowledge of right. Much is said of natural principles; but what, he exclaims, “are our natural principles, but the principles to which we are accustomed?” (II. 131). Not without reason man appeals to nature; and this word, like *justice*, has no doubt a meaning; for if it had not, it would not exist: but “the *true nature* being lost

(for man) everything becomes his nature" (II. 131) ; everything for him takes the place of nature. "Custom is a second nature which destroys the first. Why is not custom natural? I am afraid that this nature is but itself a first custom, as custom is a second nature" (II. 132).

From this impossibility of finding evident principles, principles which all the world acknowledges, it follows that "the only universal rules will be the laws of the country in ordinary matters, and plurality in others" (II. 134) ; which means, that in matters which the law cannot provide for, the accidental fact of the majority shall make law, and that the law shall regulate all the rest.

And what shall be this law, which Bossuet, speaking of the republics of Greece, has magnificently defined to be "reason recognised by the whole people?" It will be force. "Without doubt (says Pascal) the equality of blessings," by which he probably means the equality of social advantages, "is just ; but not being able to cause that it be enforced to obey justice, men have made it just to obey force ; not being able to enforce justice, men have justified force, in order that the just and the strong might coincide, and that there might be peace, which is the sovereign blessing" (II. 134-135).

This last passage, little in accordance, perhaps, with the preceding, seems to indicate that the notion of righteousness is less strange to the minds of men than the wish to be righteous is strange to their will. The consciences of men fundamentally agree ; their selfishnesses never agree. This being so, it has become necessary to erect might into right, in order to have a point of departure, a datum ; and this is what men have been compelled at last tacitly to agree upon.

“How well it is (exclaims Pascal, with an admiration somewhat ironical) to distinguish men by the external, rather than by the internal qualities! Which of us two shall take precedence? Which shall give place to the other? The less intelligent? But I am as intelligent as the other. We must go to fight upon this point. The other has four lacqueys, and I have but one. That is something visible, it is a matter of counting. It is for me then to yield, and I am a fool if I contest the point. Thus we are at peace by this means, which is the greatest of blessings” (I. 184).

And elsewhere he says: “The most unreasonable things in the world become the most reasonable, because of the disordered condition of men. What can be less reasonable than to choose to govern a state the first son of a queen?” —(A queen, he says, not a king, in order that the epigram may be complete). “People do not choose as commander of a ship the one of the passengers who is of the best family. This law would be ridiculous and unjust. But because they are and will always be so, it becomes reasonable and just; for whom should they chose? The most virtuous and the most intelligent? Behold us forthwith at blows. Every one pretends to be the most virtuous and the most intelligent. Let us then attach this quality to something about which there can be no dispute. This man is the eldest son of the king. This is simple; there is no room for dispute. Reason cannot do better; for civil war is the greatest of evils” (I. 177).

We easily perceive what is the meaning of this word *reasonable* in the thought of Pascal. The question is simply as to *expediency*, under the name of reason. But what is reasonable only in this way will become so in a far higher

sense for any one who will place himself on the point of view of Christianity. This Pascal tells us in the following passage:—

“Rank: The people honour persons of high birth. The half-intelligent despise them, saying, that birth is not a personal, but an accidental advantage. The intelligent honour them, not by the thought of the people, but by after-thought (that is, more reflective, more profound thought). Devout men, who have more zeal than knowledge, despise them, notwithstanding the consideration which causes them to be honoured by the intelligent, because they judge of them by a new light which piety gives them. But perfect Christians honour them by another and superior light” (I. 218).

This does not mean that the greatness of the great is just in itself. It remains precisely as it was. What perfect Christians honour in the great is not themselves, but apparently the eternal providence of Him who has made them great.

And after all this, justice or social truth is so much one of our requirements, that injustice, in order to maintain itself, has need to pass for justice. The very people, who take “the antiquity of the laws as a proof of their truth” and who, on that ground, yield them obedience, “are apt to revolt, when they are shown that these laws are worth nothing” (II. 131). It is Pascal who speaks, gentlemen, and it is still he who adds, “and this can be shown respecting all laws (that they are worth nothing) by looking at them from a certain side.” From what side? Pascal does not say.

Such are the politics of our author. From these consider-

ations it is undoubtedly easy to pass to the misery of man ; for this, I think, is one of them. But our misery being thus sufficiently established by all that Pascal has now said, it only remains further to balance it with our greatness. This Pascal does in a chapter of incomparable beauty. Man, in the bosom of his misery, is great, because he does not confound his misery with himself ; because he does not consent to come down to the level of his misery ; in a word, because he wishes to be great. “Despite the view of all our miseries which touch us, which hold us by the throat, we have (says Pascal) an instinct which we cannot repress, which elevates us” (II. 8). What do I say ? Man is not only great because he knows himself great, but because he knows himself miserable. “The greatness of man is great (says Pascal) in that he knows himself miserable. It is to be miserable, in truth, to know ourselves miserable ; but it is to be great to know that we are miserable” (II. 82). What is it then that is great in the one case and the other ? It is not specifically to know that we are great, nor specifically to know that we are miserable ; it is *to know*. But to know is to think. It is then *thought* that constitutes the greatness of man ; and reason, which is the instrument of thought, reason, so degraded, according to Pascal, that it is no longer *reasonable* (II. 125), is the constituent element, the foundation of our greatness. It is often *foolish*, this thought, but still it is thought. “How low it is by its defects ! but how great by its nature !” For it is it that makes the being of man. “It behoved to have great defects, that it should be contemptible” (II. 85). Man is deeply convinced of this ; his love for glory may prove it. “For, whatever possession he may have on the earth, whatever health and essential

comfort he may have, he is not satisfied if he is not in the esteem of men. He estimates so highly the reason of man, that whatever advantage he may have upon the earth, if he is not also placed advantageously in the reason of man, he is not content" (II. 80).

This is what balances his miseries; this is what prevents their destroying him. "Man is but the feeblest reed in nature; but he is a thinking reed. It is not needed that the entire universe arm itself to crush him. A vapour, a drop of water, is sufficient to kill him. But though the universe should crush him, man would still be more noble than that which kills him, because he knows that he dies, and the universe knows nothing of the advantage that it has over him.—All our dignity then consists in thought. It is by this that we are to elevate ourselves, not by the space or the time which we cannot fill. Let us then labour to think: behold the beginning of morality" (II. 84).

This last expression, so unexpected, darts forth like a lightning-flash, at the end of the passage. Morality is then loftier than thought, and thought has all its greatness, only in so far as it is the beginning of morality. Let us keep this in mind.

But if we know ourselves to be great even by this that we feel ourselves miserable, the knowledge of our misery brings us in other light. We should not feel ourselves miserable if we had always been so. "Who is wretched because he is not a king, except a king deposed? Should we consider Paulus *Æ*Emilius unhappy because he is no longer consul? On the contrary, all the world would consider him fortunate to have been consul, because the condition of the consulship was not to be always consul. But

we should regard Perseus unhappy in being no longer king, because the condition of his kingship was to be always king" (II. 82). "All the miseries of man (that is to say, all the suffering which occasions to him the three-fold want of which Pascal has told us), prove his greatness. His miseries are those of a great lord, of a king dethroned" (II. 82).

"Let man now estimate himself at his proper price. Let him love himself, for he has in him a nature capable of good; but let him not, for that, love the basenesses that are in him. Let him despise himself, because this capacity is empty; but let him not, for that, despise his natural capacity. Let him hate himself; let him love himself. He has in him the capacity of knowing the truth and of being happy; but he has not truth, either constant or satisfying" (II. 90). "Shall the only one who knows it be the only unhappy one?" (II. 118.)

This "constant or satisfying" truth, where is it to be sought for?

The philosophers present themselves.

After a profound discussion, Pascal rejects the Stoics and the Epicureans, the former of whom have known only the greatness, and the latter only the misery of man. "Some (says he) have wished to renounce the passions and become gods; others have wished to renounce reason and become brute beasts" (II. 91).

Among all the sects of philosophers, one alone deserves to be heard, or at least compels us to hear it. It is the sect of the Pyrrhonists.

In order that this remarkable piece may be rightly understood, we must take into account the state of mind of

Pascal. It is an incomprehensible mixture of contempt and terror.

One would say, on seeing the commencement, that the general tone will be that of contempt.

“ I shall write here (says Pascal) my thoughts without order, and not perhaps in confusion without design. It is the true order, and will mark my design even by the disorder. I should do too much honour to my subject, if I treated it with order : since I wish to show that it is incapable of order.” (II. 96.)

This disorder, which was intended to be a sign of disdain, this kind of rolling of the ship into which the author embarks us with himself on the ocean of doubt, inspires the unhappy passengers rather with alarm than contempt.

The point of departure, the datum of the whole chapter, is this. “ Man is made to know the truth : he desires it ardently, he searches for it ; yet when he tries to seize it, he is so dazzled and confounded, that he gives occasion to dispute his possession of it. It is this that has given birth to the two sects of Pyrrhonists and Dogmatists, the former of whom have wished to take away from man all knowledge of the truth, the latter strive to assure him of it ; but each with reasons so little truth-like, that they increase the confusion and embarrassment of man, as long as he has no other light than that which he finds in his own nature.” (II. 100.)

They cannot overthrow one another. Dogmatism is strong, because it has nature, or a sort of internal necessity on its side ; Pyrrhonism is strong by the logical weakness of its rival, but not otherwise.

“ We have,” says the author, “ an incapacity of proof which cannot be overcome by any dogmatism. We have an idea of truth, which cannot be overcome by any Pyrrhonism” (II. 99). But at bottom “ Pyrrhonism is true.” So Pascal says, and throughout several pages you shall see him, with a sort of enthusiasm, act the part of an advocate or organ of Pyrrhonism, of which he reproduces the best known arguments. “ The only strength of the Dogmatists (adds he) is, that speaking in good faith and sincerely, we cannot doubt natural principles. Against this the Pyrrhonists oppose the uncertainty of our origin, which includes that of our nature; to which the Dogmatists will still have to seek an answer while the world lasts.” (II. 102.)

All the answer that can be given is, that if reason gives reason to the Pyrrhonists, “ nature confounds them;” nature, says Pascal, “ supports feeble reason, and prevents its being so extravagant” (II. 103).

Thus we find, indeed, in our reason, an obstacle to Dogmatism; but we find in our nature an absolute opposition to Pyrrhonism. Whether we will or no, we affirm, we dogmatise, we believe.

This is very well for practice and for life; but in theory the difficulty remains untouched. Pascal does not restrict himself, against Pyrrhonism, to this summary and haughty plea of declining jurisdiction. He comes down to the field of discussion, and maintains that Pyrrhonism derives the greater part of its force from a *petitio principii*. Pyrrhonism defies our reason to prove first principles; but in fact that is not its affair. It would be of as much use to deny to a man that he is suffering or enjoying till he has proved it.

This denial would be exactly like that of M. Jourdain's tailor in the *Bourgeois-gentilhomme*. We must rise up from proof to proof unto a fact which does not admit of proof—a fact which we affirm because we feel it. It would serve nothing to say that what we call primitive is not always primitive; for, if we are liable, as I admit that we are, to take the derivative for the primitive, we shall never take the primitive for the derivative. It is perfectly in accordance with reason to suppose that there are truths without the reach of reasoning. It would be unreasonable to deny it. By those truths, independent of reasoning, we do not mean the mysteries of the Divine essence, but the truths which immediate intuition, or the heart, as Pascal says, makes known to us. The heart, as well as the reason, is an organ of knowledge; and although it does not reason, we cannot see why man should put less confidence in it than in those first principles of the reason, which cannot be proved, and from which all men, even the Pyrrhonists, set out in proving their systems. As the Pyrrhonists do not deny these first principles of logic, since they make use of them, they have no right to deny first principles in general. And it serves them nothing to say, that under the name of the *heart*, Pascal again introduces *nature*. Why not? What is the meaning of the term? The question is always about a primitive fact, which is affirmed without being proved. We willingly grant this. Was it not always necessary that reason should have a point of departure? Could it be its own point of departure? In that case we should not be men; we should be God. But it is time that we should let Pascal speak:—

“We know truth, not only by the reason, but also by the

heart. It is in this latter way that we know first principles ; and it is in vain that reasoning, which has nothing to do with the matter, attempts to dispute them. The Pyrrhonists, who have only this for their object, labour at it to no purpose. We know that we are not dreaming, however unable we are to prove it by reasoning. This inability shows only the weakness of our reason ; not, as they would have it, the uncertainty of all our knowledge. For the knowledge of first principles, as the existence of *space, time, motion, numbers*, is as firm as any of those which our reasoning gives us. And it is upon such knowledge of the heart and of instinct, that reason supports itself and founds all its discourses. The heart perceives that there are three dimensions in space, and that numbers are infinite ; and reason then demonstrates that there are no two square numbers of which the one is double the other. Principles are perceived ; propositions are deduced, and the whole with certainty, though by different ways. And it is as ridiculous that reason should demand of the heart proofs of its first principles before it will admit them, as it would be ridiculous that the heart should demand of the reason a perception of all the propositions that it demonstrates, before it will receive them.

“ This inability ought then to serve only to humble reason, which would judge of every thing, but not to lessen our certainty, as if reason alone were capable of instructing us. Would to God that, on the contrary, we had no need of reason at all, and that we knew all things by instinct and feeling ! But nature has refused us this blessing, and on the contrary it gives us but very little knowledge of this sort ; all other knowledge can only be acquired by reasoning.” (I. 108-109.)

This, gentlemen, if I be not much mistaken, this is the last word of Pascal on this subject. And many other passages establish, as does the last line of this passage, his confidence in reason as an instrument of certainty, and his freedom from the *extravagance* of Pyrrhonism. Thus you may hear him say :—

“If we shock the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous.” There are two excesses equally dangerous : “to exclude reason, and to admit only reason” (II. 348). “As to those who have not religion by feeling, we can only procure it for them by reasoning” (II. 352). “The method of God is to put religion into the mind by reasons, and into the heart by grace” (II. 178).

I do not think that I am wrong in saying that these passages express the conviction of Pascal. On his own account personally he was not a Pyrrhonist ; he regarded Pyrrhonism as a malady of the human mind, but as a malady inherent in man, who cannot, he says, “either escape from one of these sects, or abide in any of them” (II. 104). This malady is a consequence of our fall. “For (exclaims our author) what are we to infer from all our darkness, except our unworthiness ?” (II. 155). “We must have been born guilty, or God would be unjust” (II. 144).

“Know then, O proud one (says he to man), what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, impotent reason ! Keep silence, weak nature ! Learn that man infinitely transcends man, and hear from your Master your real condition, which you know not. Listen to God. For, in short, if man had never been corrupted, he would, in his innocence, enjoy both truth and happiness with assurance. And if

man had never been but corrupted, he would have no idea either of truth or of happiness. But, wretches that we are, and all the more so than if there had been no greatness in our condition, we have an idea of happiness, and cannot attain to it ; we perceive an image of truth, and possess only falsehood. Incapable of absolute ignorance and of certain knowledge, it is manifest that we were once in a degree of perfection from which we are unhappily fallen" (II. 104).

Be it as it may (for that is the whole object of this chapter), behold, as regards truth and happiness, the philosophers set aside. After all their efforts, man remains what he was,—an object of surprise and terror,—a deplorable enigma. "What a chimera, then, is man ! What a novelty, a monster, a chaos ! what a contradictory subject,—what a prodigy ! Judge of all things, a weak earth-worm ; depository of truth, a sink of uncertainty and error ; the glory and the shame of the universe !" (II. 103). "If he boast of himself I humble him ; if he humble himself I boast of him ; and always contradict him till he comprehend that he is an incomprehensible monster" (II. 89).

Let us leave philosophy, and see if religion have more knowledge and power. Natural religion, which Pascal does not name, but which he speaks of without naming it, is but a sort of philosophy, which pretends to connect all its ideas with the idea of God, making all things depend on Him and tend towards Him by turns. This new philosophy finds no more favour in Pascal's eyes than the others. It directs us to God. A laudable intention, but, at the same time, a gross error respecting our natural capacity. For man either knows, or does not know, himself. But "what a fine thing it is to say to a man who does not know himself, that he

should go from himself to God ; and what a fine thing to say to a man who does know himself !” (II. 95). The former will not care to do so through arrogance ; the latter will be kept back by discouragement. Speaking to the philosophers who would persuade men to dispense with God, Pascal said to them : “ If man is not made for God, why is it that he is not happy but in God ? ” Speaking to the followers of natural religion, he says to them : “ If man is made for God, why is he so contrary to God ? ” (II. 90). First destroy this contrariety.

Such, under one aspect, is the weakness of this philosophy. Its weakness is not less evident in another respect, that of the knowledge of God.

It pretends to adduce two sorts of proofs of the existence of the Supreme Being, physical proofs and metaphysical proofs. The physical proofs, derived from the fair order of the universe, implying a system of optimism, fill Pascal with a contempt which he does not conceal (II. 113). He puts scarcely more value on the metaphysical proofs, on which he makes this observation : “ The metaphysical proofs of God are so remote from the reasonings of men, and so involved, that they have little influence. And though it should be of use to some, it would only be during the instant that they were looking at the demonstration. An hour after, they would be afraid that they had been misled ” (II. 114).

Do not these words recall those of Fontenelle in his eulogy of Malebranche :—

“ It is sufficiently apparent that in this respect (in respect of edification), metaphysical ideas will always be, for the most of men, like the flame of spirit of wine, which is too subtile to set fire to wood.”

But more than this : these proofs are not only insufficient, they are useless. “I will not undertake (says our author) to prove by *natural reasons* either the existence of God, or the Trinity, or the immortality of the soul, or anything of this kind ; not only because I should not feel myself sufficiently able to find in nature the means of convincing hardened atheists, but also because this knowledge, without Jesus Christ, is useless and barren. Though a man were persuaded that the proportions of numbers are immaterial eternal truths, dependent on a first truth in which they subsist, and which is called *God*, I should not consider that he had made much advance as respects his salvation” (II. 115).

The author concludes these considerations on natural religion, with the following reflections, full of seriousness and melancholy :

“I look round on all sides, and everywhere I see only obscurity. Nature offers me nothing but matter of doubt and disquietude. If I saw nothing to indicate a Divinity, I should determine not to believe in one. If I saw everywhere marks of a Creator, I should rest peacefully in the faith. But seeing too much to admit of denial, and too little for assurance, I am in a lamentable condition ; and I have wished a hundred times, that if a God sustains nature, she would unequivocally indicate Him, and that if the indications which she gives are fallacious, she would suppress them altogether ; that she would say all, or say nothing, that I might see what part to take. Whereas, in my actual condition, knowing neither what I am nor what I ought to do, I cannot find out either my condition or my duty. My heart longs to know where is the true good, that I might

follow it. Nothing would be too costly for eternity. (II. 128.)

Let us leave behind us all these ruins, and march, on the steps of Pascal, towards an edifice which has not been built by the hand of man.

Two ideas serve as the foundation to this second part, in which Pascal begins to affirm after having denied so much, —to build after having demolished so much.

We must make up our minds to receive the truth from the hands of God.

We can only receive it by the heart.

Or rather, these are the two conditions of success in the investigation to which Pascal is about to devote himself. He who shall ask of himself the truth concerning God, shall not find it ; for, if he were capable of finding it of himself, he would never have lost it. He who shall wish, in this study, to make use of his reason alone, and not of his heart, will not comprehend, will not know, or will know in vain.

Not only is the heart of great use in this inquiry, but the heart, by itself alone, is sufficient for it. A great number of passages reproduce this idea, to which Pascal attached great importance, and which constitutes, in great part, the originality of this apology.

“There are three means of believing, reason, custom, inspiration (or the heart). . . . A man must open his mind to proofs ; confirm himself in them by custom ; but prepare himself by humiliations for inspiration, which alone can produce the true and salutary effect.” (II. 177.)

Pascal goes still farther : “Do not be surprised (he says) to see simple men believe without reasoning. God gives them love of Himself and hatred of themselves. He inclines

their hearts to believe. No one will ever believe with a profitable and faithful belief, if God do not incline his heart; and when he does so, a man will believe" (II. 177). Thus is reasoning superseded by love of God and self-hatred.

"Those whom we see to be Christians without knowledge of prophecies and of proofs, do not fail to judge as soundly of it as those who have this knowledge. They judge of it by the heart, as the others judge of it by the mind. It is God Himself who inclines them to believe, and thus they are very effectually convinced." (II. 179.) Here the heart dispenses with even the knowledge of the proofs.

"Those to whom God has given religion by the feeling of the heart, are very happy and well persuaded. But, as to those who have it not, we cannot procure it for them but by reasoning, waiting till God himself impress it on their hearts; without which faith is useless for salvation." (II. 352.)

Elsewhere, and more briefly, he says: "Behold what faith is: God sensible to the heart, not to the reason." (II. 172.)

From all this Pascal derives a practical lesson, which you will thank me for presenting to you.

"The procedure of God, who disposes all things with gentleness, is to put religion into the mind by reasons, and into the heart by grace. But to try to put it into the mind and the heart by violence and threats, is not to put religion there but terror." (II. 178.)

Having got thus far, gentlemen, picture to yourselves a man whom religion, by its internal characters of truth, powerfully attracts to itself, but who, whether from natural incapacity or want of knowledge, feels himself to be, and is in fact,

unable on this point to bring his reason into accordance with his heart. Or else, suppose a man whose reason has been satisfied of the truth of Christianity by the external proofs, whom his reason, consequently, urges to be a Christian, but who cannot become one. Both these are well known and common cases. Both the one and the other, in order to take this last step, which in itself alone is equivalent to the whole distance, have but one thing to do. Pascal has already told us what it is, "to prepare themselves by humiliations for inspiration." (II. 177.) This he expresses elsewhere, in terms less eloquent, but more explicit.

"I should wish to induce man to be ready, and set free from passions, in order to follow truth wherever he may find it. Aware how much his knowledge is darkened by the passions, I should wish him to hate that lust in himself which sways him at its pleasure, so that it might neither blind him in making his choice, nor impede him when he has chosen." (II. 90.)

Such, in both the cases which we have supposed, is the liquidation of the arrears, the means of supplying the deficit.

But Pascal confines himself to the former case, that in which the heart being nearly resolved, the understanding is, as it were, fettered in a lamentable infidelity. This is the subject of the famous piece (*Infinite : nothing*, II. 167-169), in which Pascal appears to reduce a question of truth to a question of simple calculation, or of interest, rightly understood. I shall discuss afterwards the purpose and the meaning of this piece. At present I shall only say, that the admirable saying of Christ, "He who shall be willing to do the will of my Father, shall know whether my doctrine cometh from God, or whether I speak of myself," finds here

a commentary and developments with which it might have dispensed, and in which the boldness and the ardour of Pascal's mind are too conspicuous ; but of which, after all, the idea is just and even philosophical. The thought of Pascal may be summed up in these words, which we read elsewhere : " I should soon have abandoned pleasures, say they, if I had faith. For my part, I say to you, you should soon have faith if you had abandoned pleasures. But it is your part to begin. If I could I would give you faith. I cannot do this, nor, consequently, prove the truth of what you say (that you would abandon pleasures). But you can abandon pleasures, and test the truth of what I say." (II. 181.)

To the reasonings of the mind, and the inspirations of the heart, which have determined you to believe, join, when faith shall have been given you, habit or custom. Bring the *automaton*, as Pascal terms it, to concur for the preservation of the blessing which you have obtained by the use of your higher faculties. " We must have recourse to custom when once the mind has seen where the truth lies, in order to refresh and tinge ourselves with that belief which is continually escaping from us. For it is too difficult to have the proofs of it always before us" (II. 175). I suppose that Pascal would only have completed his own thought by saying, that if there be a habit fitted to preserve faith, it is the habit of acting and living according to that faith ; for here at least the power is maintained by the means which have procured it.

The remainder of the work does not require so detailed an analysis on our part. Not that it is not worthy of it, but it was my chief aim to guide you in the reading of the first

part. The second is beyond comparison more connected and more clear.

In it the author treats first of the characteristics of the true religion, which must, says he, inspire us at once with esteem, and contempt of ourselves (II. 141, 142), constrain us to love God (II. 144); and lastly, in order that it may be a moral fact and a principle of morality in our life, must "afford enough of light to those who desire only to see, and enough of darkness to those who are contrarily disposed" (II. 151).

Approaching, then, the positive religions, "he sees abundance of religions in many quarters of the world, and in all ages; but they have neither the morality which can please him, nor the proofs which can arrest him" (II. 185). Then he sets himself to the consideration of the Christian religion, founded on a preceding religion, of which he studies the history and the characteristics, with reference to its design. He passes on to the miracles, the types, the prophecies, and then enters, but in his own manner, on the ordinary paths of apologetics. There are few things in this part of the work which are not original, its general characteristic being, in conformity with the principles which he had previously laid down, to speak to the heart in speaking to the mind. At last the author comes to Christianity, or, to speak as he speaks, to Jesus Christ, the object of the prophecies, the end of the miracles, the inner sense of all the Jewish religion, the divine flower which comes at the proper season to bloom upon this great tree planted near to the cradle of humanity, and of which He was the concealed root before He was the open and fragrant flower. It is not till after he has spoken of Him who is the object and the author of the Christian

religion, that he treats of the Christian religion itself, as a body of doctrine and of morals ; and that he applies himself, by several striking considerations, to exhibit its excellence and its beauty. I shall not quote any of these. I prefer transcribing for you the immortal page in which, speaking of him who has realised on the earth the idea of the true greatness, he carries us with him over the scale of all greatness.

“The infinite distance between body and mind is a figure of the infinitely more infinite distance between mind and love : for this is supernatural.

“All the splendour of worldly greatness has no lustre for people who are engaged in investigations of the mind.

“The greatness of men of mind is invisible to kings, rich men, captains,—all carnally great ones.

“The greatness of wisdom, which is nowhere but in God, is invisible to the carnal and the intellectual. The three orders are different in kind.

“Great geniuses have their empire, their *eclat*, their greatness, their victory, their brilliancy ; they have no need of carnal greatness, with which they have no concern. They are not seen by eyes but by minds. That is enough.

“The saints have their empire, their *eclat*, their victory, their lustre ; and they have no need of carnal or mental greatness, with which they have no concern, for they neither add to them nor take from them. They are seen of God and of angels, not of bodies nor of curious minds. God is enough for them.

“Archimedes, without any *eclat*, would be in the same veneration. He did not fight battles for men to gaze at, but he has given his inventions to all minds. Oh how he has shone upon men’s minds !

“Jesus Christ, without property and without any enlargement of science, is great in his order of holiness. He did not give us any invention,—He did not reign ; but He was humble, patient, holy, holy, holy towards God ; terrible to the devils ; without any sin. Oh how He came in great state and in prodigious magnificence to the eyes of the heart, and of those who can see wisdom !

“It would have been useless to Archimedes to act the prince in his geometrical books, though he had been one. It would have been useless to our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to shine in His kingdom of holiness, to come as a king. He did well to come with the splendour of His own order.

“There are men who can only admire carnal greatness, as if there were no such thing as mental greatness ; and others who admire only mental greatness, as if there were not infinitely higher greatness in wisdom.

“All bodies,—the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms,—are not so much worth as the smallest mind : for it knows all this, and knows itself ; but matter knows nothing.

“All bodies together, and all minds together, and all their productions, are not so much worth as the smallest emotion of love : it is of an order infinitely more exalted.

“From all bodies together we could not draw forth the smallest thought ; it is impossible, thought being of another order.

“From all bodies and minds, we could not extract an emotion of true love. It is impossible, love being of another and a supernatural order.” (II. 330—333.)

It is difficult to distinguish, among the *Miscellaneous Thoughts* of Pascal, those which belong to his principal de-

sign : but they agree with it, if they do not belong to it. It is the same view of the condition of man, and the same lofty disdain of all that the world admires. Who can fail to recognise, in the tone as in the thought, the Pascal of the *Apology* in the following passages :—

“Knowledge has two extremes which meet. The first is the pure natural ignorance in which all men are found to be at their birth. The other extreme is that at which those great souls arrive, who, having gone over all that men can know, find that *they* know nothing, and land in the same ignorance from which they set out. But it is a knowing ignorance which knows itself. Those between the two, who have escaped from the natural ignorance and have not been able to reach the other, have some taint of this self-sufficient knowledge, and act the intelligent. These men trouble the world, and misjudge everything” (I. 180).

“The last act is bloody, however fair be the comedy in all the rest. At last the earth is thrown on the head, and there is an end for ever” (I. 214). You may remember the commentary of M. de Chateaubriand : “How frightful is this last expression. We see first the *comedy*, then the *earth*, and then *eternity*. The carelessness with which the expression is thrown out shows the worthlessness of human life. What bitter indifference in this short and cold history of man !”

“A small matter comforts us, because a small matter afflicts us.”

How often have the following thoughts been quoted :

“Cromwell was about to lay waste all Christendom. The royal family had been ruined, and his own powerful for ever, but for a small grain of sand which found its way into his urethra. Rome itself was about to tremble under

him. But this small gravel being put there, he dies, his family is humbled, all is in peace, and the king is restored."

"He who would know fully the vanity of man, has only to consider the causes and the effects of love. . . . If Cleopatra's nose had been shorter, the whole face of the earth would have been different." (I. 207.)

We are now on the territory of Voltaire, whose taste is known for this bringing together of small causes and great effects. The religious point of view alone can raise this frivolous antithesis above itself. For Voltaire, there is nothing on this side or beyond the fact which he chooses to exhibit. Pascal, in exhibiting it, perhaps obeys a secret desire to humiliate man; but, without doubt, his inmost thought is summed up in this word of a prophet: "Oh, Eternal One! I know that the way of man depends not on himself."

Man is certainly more roughly handled, and with a master's hand, in those notions in which Pascal appears to anticipate La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère.

"We do not sustain ourselves in virtue by our own strength, but by the counterpoise of two opposite vices, as we remain erect between two contrary winds. Take away one of these vices, and we fall into the other." (I. 209.)

Virtue would then be the balance of vices. La Rochefoucauld was never more bitter: and he is never so much so as is Pascal in this thought, in which passion is exhibited:—

"All men naturally hate each other. Advantage has been taken, so far as possible, of lust (selfishness), to make it subservient to the public good; but it is only a feint and a false image of charity. For at bottom it is only hatred." (I. 225.)

"Man is so constituted (says Pascal again) that, by means

of telling him that he is a fool, he believes it; and by means of saying it to himself, he makes himself believe it." (I. 218.)

"Reason commands us far more imperiously than a master; for, in disobeying the one, we are unhappy, in disobeying the other, we are foolish."

We have every reason to believe that Pascal greatly dreaded the latter of these misfortunes.

On the whole, it cannot be denied that Pascal, in this part of his book as in others, has

"Pushed to excess his keen hyperbole."

I confess that I prefer fixing your attention on the thoughts in which passion has less place, and philosophy much more. It is, in fact, philosophy that claims the luminous and large views which Pascal has condensed in the following passages:—

"All our reasoning is reduced to yielding to feeling."

"Nothing that is presented to the soul is simple, and the soul is never presented simply to any subject." (I. 191.)

"I know a little what it (order) is, and how few people understand it. Mathematics preserve it, but they are useless in their depth." (II. 389.)

"The reasons which, when seen at a distance, seem to bound our view, do not bound it when we come up to them; we begin to see beyond them." (I. 215.)

Notwithstanding all the offence that has been taken at this other thought,—"We ought to have a thought in reserve, and to judge of everything by it, still speaking like the people,"—I will venture to say that it appears to me very just, saving its form, for which Pascal is not responsible. From man to man, truth is one only in the feeling which they have of it; but there would be as many expressions of

it as there are minds, if the instrument (I mean language) could accommodate itself to them, and if the fineness of the conception in every one were equal to the delicacy of the impression.\* Every one, then, must have his expression or his thought in reserve; but he must, at the same time, speak like the people, which does not mean that he will disguise his own thought, but only that, in his language, he will confine himself to an expression less learned, less profound, less philosophical, which is within reach and in use of all. This is not the esoterism of the old philosophers, nor the opposition of two senses, one of which amuses the imagination, while the other occupies and nourishes the thought. There are two languages: that of the thinker, and that of the simple man; but the thought is one and the same.

The *Thoughts on Eloquence and Style* have been, very properly, put by themselves. There is no one who would not desire to see the elements reunited of the theory which Pascal has applied in his writings with so rare a superiority. Theory and practice, with Pascal, translate each other with extreme exactness. To apply the soul all naked to truth all naked, is what Pascal does, and what he requires of a writer. Nothing, not even the most transparent crystal, between the author and his subject; that is, in two words, all his rhetoric. In other words, to be a writer without making profession of it, to be a man rather than a writer, to live first, and then let his life develop itself in his words: this is the whole of the art. The business is not so much to clothe the truth as to strip it, diligently to remove from it all that, under whatever pretence, might come between it

\* See Appendix, Note S.

and us. “ When we see the natural style, we are completely astonished and charmed ; for we expected to see an author, and we find a man. Whereas those who have good taste, and who, on looking into a book, think that they will find a man, are wholly surprised when they find an author ” (I. 249).

Pascal is not less excellent when, from this intrinsic truthfulness of style, he passes to that other truthfulness which it has been agreed to call eloquence. For eloquence is never aught but truth. If, in the former case, truth consists in the intimate relation between the expression and the thought, it supposes, in the second case, a no less intimate relation between the soul that speaks and the soul that hears. I shall not transcribe a passage so well known. Those who remember it will, I doubt not, agree that the generating principle of eloquence could not be defined with more simplicity and force. Pascal has not treated, has scarcely even touched, any subject, without having in some sort rendered it a forbidden subject to all men besides. The most accomplished, after him, seem reduced to *come near him* ; so closely does his thought grasp the object, so closely does his expression grasp his thought. And when we reflect how constantly he disdained the use of figurative language, which comes to our help after direct language fails us, precisely as music comes after speech, we cannot sufficiently admire so much force. All that figure is to others, emotion is to him, and passion is the sole ornament of his style.

By the masculine simplicity of his diction, Pascal seemed to have taken part, in literature, for the ancients against the moderns. But the fact is, that he thought little of

the matter. He had, I believe, little acquaintance with the ancients; and beyond the very general principles which he has laid down in his *Thoughts on Eloquence and Style*, literary questions had no existence for him. Much more a *realist* than a *humanist* in education, he is not one of the writers who lend their authority in favour of classical studies. It is much that he did not disavow them. Perhaps this great writer, who, after having invented the mathematics, invented the art of writing, made too little account, in this delicate matter, of tradition, and set too little value upon models. Perhaps this great mind, who comprehended so many things, did not take the trouble to comprehend all things. I am afraid that he had scarcely more relish for good poetry than for bad, and that all that was poetical was to him "the fatal laurel and the beauteous star." It is rare, it is perhaps impossible, to be at once immense and well proportioned. In more than one respect, Pascal was only immense. In other respects, and these the most important, it is precisely proportion that distinguishes him and renders him eminent.

happy, to the reception of the Gospel. For a great number of wretches, whether of the lettered class or of the ignorant crowd, the adoption of Christianity was a last attempt, tried advisedly by some and blindly by others. Anticipatively, a want is a proof. Without doubt he had examined but little, that warrior of Northumberland, who towards the middle of the sixth century gave his vote in these terms, if we are to believe M. Thierry, in favour of the new doctrine :—

“Perhaps you recollect, oh King, a thing which sometimes happens in winter days, when you are seated at table with your captains and your men at arms, while a good fire is lighted, and your hall is comfortably warm, but it rains, snows, and blows outside. A little bird comes in and crosses the hall with a dash, entering by one door and going out by the other. The instant of this crossing is for it full of delight. It feels no more the rain or the storm. But that instant is brief. The bird flies out in the twinkling of an eye, and from winter it passes into winter. Such appears to me the life of man upon the earth, and its duration for a moment, compared with the length of the time which precedes and that which follows it. This time is dark and uncomfortable for us. It tortures us by the impossibility of our knowing it. If, then, the new doctrine can teach us anything in any degree certain, it deserves that we should follow it.”

Without further examination, the chronicles tell us, the new worship was voted by the acclamations of the people. Examination, experience,—that involuntary examination,—came afterwards. They had believed from the simple necessity of believing. They knew afterwards why they had

believed. Some of the most remarkable pages in the first part of the *Thoughts* are but the development of this pleasant apologue of the companion of Edwin. The Saxon, the barbarian, had only been struck by the most immaterial and the least immediate part of the misfortune of our condition. Still the idea of introducing an apology for Christianity by a profound study of all our miseries, belongs to Pascal. Augustine and Tertullian had taken as their point of support the miseries of society in their times, and the inability of polytheism to relieve them. They had made use of history, Pascal made use of natural history. I cannot say that Charron set him the example. In the first place, Charron has only spoken of our incapacity of knowledge, and of that he has not written in Pascal's point of view. Charron represents himself as an apologist for Christianity ; but he is not. To shake the foundations of belief in general, is to shake, with the same blow, the foundations of the Christian belief. Was this his object ? I have never been able to help believing that it was. Be that as it may, Charron and his associates are but subtle, cold, indifferent intellects. Pascal is a man, touched by the misfortune of his race ; and if he exaggerates this misfortune (which, in his point of view, is scarcely possible), it is at least not because it gives him pleasure to do so. He does not enlarge the wound, but the better to heal it.

This humanity of thought and of heart is, perhaps, the most characteristic feature of his book. It is a tender and austere compassion, in which are perceptible respect and a sort of piety towards man. This respect, this piety, rest upon the idea that man is the most accurate expression of the creative conception, the most direct emanation from the

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Divine essence, and, with respect to creation, the key-stone of the arch, which falls and crumbles with him. To reconstruct the arch around this stone, raised and shaped anew by a Divine hand, is the work of Christianity, which has for its object the whole creation, and not man alone; but still man especially, inasmuch as the universe is nothing without man, just as man is nothing without God. In his book Pascal addresses himself to all the wants, all the interests, all the distresses of man. He appeals, respecting them, from man to man himself. Man without God, man with God. That is the whole plan of the work, which is an apology for Christianity only in so far as Christianity is man with God; for the internal truth of Christianity—I do not say its formal or historic truth—is nought else. In estimating all sorts of proofs, Pascal, in his *Apology*, lays hold of this principal point, and refers to it and subordinates to it all questions. The chapters which have titles the most foreign to this point of view, contribute towards it as well as all the rest. A twofold psychology, that of God and that of man, is never wanting. God in His divine nature, man in his human nature, are continually considered with reference to each other.

Let us confine ourselves to one of the terms of the relation, to *man*.

The glory of the Gospel is not only to have made truth divine, but to have made it human. Jesus Christ is a God and a man; and it is the same with His doctrine. It is drawn at once from the depths of God and from the depths of man; it touches, by its two extremities, the mysteries of the Divine essence and the mysteries of human nature, which are, to say truth, but one and the same mystery; for

the doctrine of man and that of God are two lines which, inclining towards each other, end by meeting and mingling at the summit of the angle in a single and indivisible point, where all distinction escapes the eye, where all analysis is impossible to the mind. Without denying the duality of the terms, and without announcing any other design than that of determining the relation between them, the religions and the philosophies had been able only to do justice to one of the two. Their doctrine was alternately either full of God to the exclusion of man, or full of man to the prejudice of God. The union in Jesus Christ of all the fulness of the Godhead with all the fulness of manhood, was the programme or the symbol, at the same time that it was the support and the substance, of a new doctrine. This unity without confusion, consummated at once in idea and in fact, was the *fiat lux* of a new genesis, the organisation of a second chaos produced by sin ; for, a second time, but in a spiritual sense, "the earth was without form and void," as on the evening of the first of the days.

And observe well that the two elements, the human and the divine, are not the terms of a contradiction, but the two hemispheres, or, if you prefer it, the two poles of the truth. Revealed truth is human only because it is divine, it is divine only on condition of its being human. We speak here in the human point of view. We cannot place ourselves in any other. It is certain that man bears in himself the twofold necessity of being all for God and of being entirely man. Nothing can withdraw him from the empire of this twofold necessity. Nothing can even conceal it absolutely from him. The religion which does not give all to God does not answer the former of these internal laws of

his being, and even thus it is not human. The religion which tampers with his humanity withdraws him from God while professing to restore him to God, and thus it is not divine just because it is not human. Religion is a relation ; the suppression of one of the two terms destroys it. No matter which of the terms be suppressed ; either God does not exist for man, or man does not exist for God. Religion supposes God in the fulness of His Godhead, man in the fulness of his manhood ; two beings, two persons, not merely two names.

All the heresies that have sprung up in the bosom of Christianity, as well as all the systems conceived outside of Christianity, result in lessening man, or in lessening God. The religion of the heart, the living faith, preserves an admirable balance between these two excesses. *Theology* has much difficulty not to incline towards the one or the other. Why is this ? Because it rests always at some distance from the summit of the angle, on one of the sides ; whereas the living faith holds itself at the summit, whence it commands the two sides or the two slopes of the truth, without inclining towards either. Piety unites them, by an indescribable process, of which it can render no better account than we can of the union of thought and matter in our existence, a union or reconciliation which life continually realises and exhibits. Theology or science distinguishes : that is its work. But to distinguish is to separate by hypothesis ; and by means of distinguishing, we forget to reunite. Circumstances, moreover, impose law upon it. Now it places itself at the service of the divine element which has been compromised ; then it flies to the rescue of the human element which has been threatened ; and it is engrossed in

the direction of the particular task which is imposed on it by circumstances or the condition of men's minds. It alternately lessens the divinity and the humanity either in God and in man, or in Jesus Christ, who is fully both. Theologians are rare who know how to guard themselves from these two excesses; and those who know how to do so do not always pass, in the eyes of the vulgar, for true theologians.

This strife takes very different names, which cannot in any case conceal its identity from attentive eyes: predestination and liberty, doctrine and practice, the testimony of the Word and that of the Spirit. It is, in a religious point of view, the inexhaustible question in philosophy, of the subjective and the objective, which are, after all, nought else than God and man. Philosophy has not yet comprehended that the incarnation of the Word is the final and the only solution of the question which it puts. For the moment, it is at suit before the *impersonal reason*. The Christian believes in the personal reason, and at the same time the supreme, which is Jesus Christ.

To judge by appearances, theology has oftener had to do with the tendency which seeks to lessen the Divinity than with that which seeks to lessen the humanity. Excessive on its part was the reaction, as the result of which the supra-lapsarianism of Gomar was seen, with a surprised and disconcerted air, to join hands with the quietism of Madame Guyon. After these worse than fruitless strifes between pure intellects, it was time that there should come a man. The glory of Pascal is to have been a *man* in theology; the glory of having been an *honest man* in polemics and in literature is only a diminutive of this. He was not a doctor,

but a man, who could bring into theology the doctrine of the *two contraries* ;—a doctrine full of mystery and of light, which is reducible to this proposition ; that life, that all life, is the combination of two elements opposed and even contradictory to our weakness, and that, apart from this combination, life or *substantial truth* escapes us absolutely.\* This man, treating theology as a man, was Pascal. The complement of his doctrine was soon apparent. He comprehended, he explained that it was not in the head, but in the heart of man, that the belligerent parties could meet to treat of peace ; and he inaugurated, or rather he drew from the Gospel, and laid before us under the form which was proper to his genius and suitable to his time, that beautiful doctrine of the knowledge and the comprehension of divine truths by the heart, which is the dominant thought and the key of his apologetics.

The heart ! the intuition, the internal consciousness of religious truth laid hold upon immediately as first principles are ! A bold and sublime proposition, which one much greater than Pascal had professed before him—“ Believe My word, or else believe the works which I do.” Truth has its titles in itself; it is its own proof to itself; it demonstrates itself by showing itself. And the heart is the mirror of the truth. But this mirror, badly placed, does not reflect the light, until a Divine hand has turned it towards the sun. The heart requires to be *inclined* ; that in us which receives the truth, that in us which knows, believes, and loves, is not the heart such as it is, it is the heart inclined, and in the first instance the heart humbled, the heart “offering itself by humiliation to inspiration,” as

\* See Appendix, Note T.

Pascal himself expresses it. Pascal here announces the advent, proclaims the authority, measures the empire, of the Holy Spirit; Christianity considered as existing in man is the testimony, the reign of the Holy Spirit. The divine and the human meet here in a glorious and ineffable unity.

In proclaiming the all-sufficiency of the heart in the matter of faith and salvation, Pascal set out, I admit, if not from the same point, at least from the same shores, as the advocates of authority. We have seen him argue, against infidels, on the incapacity, not absolute, but relative, of human reason. But while from this incapacity, relative or absolute, those men infer the authority of a body, Pascal infers that of the internal evidence, or of the intuition supplied by the Holy Spirit. In other words, he sends us from our natural reason to the testimony of our heart, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. There is always an authority, that of the written Word or the Book of God, which is to the Spirit of God what substance is to quality or organism to life. But whatever utility may attach, in a general interest, to what science proves, after its own manner, the authority of the book, it is sufficient that the book exists, it is sufficient that a meeting has been brought about between the truth and the heart of man. And observe, that what is peculiar to the author of the *Thoughts* is not to have said that such a meeting must take place; for every one who does not preach under the name of faith a voluntary nullification or suicide of the mind and the heart, every one who wishes to find in faith that "agreement of himself with himself," which Pascal has made one of the characteristics of faith, will be at one with him on this point. What distinguishes him from those

who have confessed that we must end with this, is to have maintained that we can begin with this, and that this act, by itself alone, constitutes saving faith. Between Pascal and Lamennais the difference is capital, immense. We do not as yet say (that will come afterwards) that Pascal has not, like Lamennais, planted the roots of his demonstration in the territory of Pyrrhonism. With him faith is not a conclusion from absolute doubt; he knew too well that from absolute doubt nothing can be concluded. He has only proposed to establish the inability of reason and of nature in the matter of religion; but instead of referring us, like Lamennais, to the Church, he refers us to the Holy Spirit. There are two ways, in fact, of conceiving of Christianity: either as the kingdom of the visible authority, or as the kingdom of the Holy Spirit. The first of these systems does not, it is true, exclude the Holy Spirit; but it fetters Him, or does not permit Him "to blow where He listeth." The second restores Him to possession of His liberty, sovereign and all divine. The first, in some sort, monopolises Him; the second makes His divine influences the heritage and the blessing of all. The first says, "The Church is taught of God, believe what she believes." The second says, "Ye are all taught of God." In the first system, the Church is an authority; in the second, a help.

In the judgment of some persons, all this is rationalism; in that of others, it is pure mysticism. To our thinking, it is simply the Gospel; but, to place ourselves in the point of view and speak the language of accusation, we shall say, without thinking that it is any abuse of words, that it is *spiritualism*. The Gospel cannot but be spiritualistic. It is the Gospel only on this condition. Every other strips it of

this character; for every other denies in principle, what Jesus Christ has established at so great cost, the immediate relations of man with God, the glorious liberty of the children of God, or, to speak a less elevated language, religious individuality.

It is with the soul engaged in the life of religion, or that of thought, as with the ship launched on the waves, and seeking, across the ocean, the shores of a new world. This ocean is society, religious or civil. It bears us as the ocean, —a fluid mass on which the ship traces furrows at its pleasure, but nowhere takes the ground. The ocean carries the ship; but the ocean may overwhelm it, and does sometimes overwhelm it. Society overwhelms us much oftener; but, in short, it carries us, and we cannot arrive without being carried by it; for it is like the ocean, which, less fluid than the air, and less solid than the earth, yields to us just enough, and resists us just enough, to sustain without shackling our march towards the truth. Our destination is not the bottom of the abyss, it is the shore of the ocean. While ploughing these deep waters, let us beware lest we sink in their depths. It is enough to yield up to the element which supports us the keel of our ship. We may founder on the ocean of society as on the ocean of the globe; and it is needless to say on which of the two oceans shipwrecks are more frequent. The vessel which each one of us is charged to steer and to save is individuality, or moral liberty. It is not saved, in the religious point of view, but by the system of the pure Gospel.

The doctrine of Pascal respecting the faith of the heart, or, more properly, respecting faith by the Holy Spirit, has a bearing and consequences which Pascal himself could not

have estimated. In order to get an idea of it, let us for a moment place ourselves in the point of view of the system of visible authority, or church authority.

Before this authority can be imposed upon us, it must be legitimised. Before it can judge, it must submit to be judged. By and by it will tell us what we are to believe ; but it will not do to begin by telling us to believe in itself. It is to be all ; but, before being all, it is nothing. The first thing is to recognise it. It produces its titles, we examine them ; its powers, we verify them. Who is it that examines ? Who is it that verifies ? Without any doubt, individuals ; for the body, or the community which they are to constitute, does not yet exist ; and individuals, in this preliminary inquiry, cannot appoint delegates. Individuality has not as yet any right to abdicate. The acceptance of any authority is necessarily an act of liberty.

This being so, I entreat you to endeavour to form an idea of the task imposed on the individual. We may distinguish two cases. Either an individual believes beforehand, in a general way, in the truth of Christianity ; or he does not yet believe, and approaches the question only with the simple want, and perhaps the desire, to believe. In the former case, he will go from Christianity to the Church ; in the latter, from the Church to Christianity. But in both cases, he must come to the Church, to the visible authority ; and this authority he must prove to himself. In both cases the task is immense. Exegesis, history, metaphysics, all must be moved, all must be searched to the bottom. This must be done with the instruments of a learned dialectics and a rigorous criticism. How many persons are capable of this I know not ; but what I do know, and what all the

world will admit, is that it is a very weak and insignificant minority. But, in short, the task of which this minority alone is capable, is imposed upon all, and no one can perform it by proxy. If ever authority be necessary, desirable, it is at the very moment when authority does not as yet exist. What then, all ye simple and ignorant ones, will ye put in the place of the knowledge which ye do not possess, the time even which is not at your command, and the authority which, of necessity, withdraws itself and refuses you its support ? The heart, you will doubtless say ; but as the heart is not an authority until the Holy Spirit incline it, it will be the heart inclined by the Holy Spirit, it will be the Holy Spirit Himself, or, which is the same thing, the truth speaking directly to the heart ; and you will not, you cannot, believe that the Holy Spirit refuses Himself for your necessities, aided by your prayers. Thus you are out of pain, and I congratulate you ; for you could not have escaped from it otherwise.

But if the Holy Spirit, or the truth even, has been able to speak directly to your heart, if you acknowledge at least that it can do so, the consequence is sufficiently clear. What it can do once, it can do always. What it can do on one point, it can do on others. Its power is not limited ; why should its willingness be limited ? This will strike those especially, who, before they know if there be any authority, or where that authority is, have been so taught of God, that they have already that living faith which is properly an internal view of the truths of salvation, a communion of the heart with the truth, a life rather than a view. To them, what is the use of intermediaries ? And how shall they doubt, after having seen (if I may thus express myself) the

truth manage its business so admirably itself, that it can manage them for the future and always?

The differences, not only between men in general, but between the persons whom they have reason to believe placed, like themselves, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, will not be to them an occasion for doubt, or give them a distaste for evangelical liberty. These differences, which are accounted for by human weakness and external circumstances, cannot deprive them of the conviction of the essential and deep-seated unity which prevails among all those who are under the guidance of the same Spirit of God ; and they recall those precious words of an apostle: “If you are otherwise-minded than we, God will make known to you the truth. Meantime, let us follow the same rule in the things to the knowledge of which we have attained, and let us be united together.” (Phil. iii. 15, 16.) And with the same eye which enables them to see so much unity in these diversities, they discover diversity in that unity which is set before them as an object of envy. They know at what price this phantom of unity has been obtained, and they judge that if life cannot be purchased at too high a price, any price must be too high that is paid for death.

We are, as yet, but at the preliminaries of the theology of Pascal. It would be very interesting to trace in this theology the same character of humanity which struck us at the outset. I shall content myself, gentlemen, with having pointed it out to your attention, and recommended it to your study. You will not fail to remark to what extent the theology of Pascal is original ; I mean, to what point it belongs to himself. I wish not to exaggerate. I have already admitted elsewhere that, despite his strong individu-

ality, Pascal was affected by the influence of his age. His tendency to scepticism is not at all explained by his character, and is but half explained by the nature of his favourite studies. His reading, and the general tendency of the period, also go some way towards the explanation. His doctrinal system also does not belong to him in an absolute sense. He did not construct it, deliberately and alone, the Bible in his hand. He finds established a general tradition, and within that a more particular tradition. He is born to the Christian faith, or, more properly speaking, to the Christian life, in a medium which we may call Jansenist Catholicism ; and this tradition impresses upon him what tradition impresses on the most independent, namely, form. Under this form he becomes, under this form he will remain, a Christian. He is born in the Romish sect, and in a sect of that sect, Jansenism ; and there will he die. We are all sectaries ; and what is most important is not that we should not be such, but that we should spiritually rule the sect of which we form a part, and make the foundation prevail over the form. We scarcely attain this but by means of some inconsistency, or, to use a stronger term, some gross contradiction ; for every sect contains some element of error, and we only subdue error by means of truth. Such is our destiny throughout. It is the fable of Deucalion always. You see human bodies fixed in the ground by one of their extremities. What is of consequence is, that the head be above-ground. I have no desire to eulogise sects. But, in short, in our actual infirmity, the form or the sect is to truth what our flesh, heavy and corruptible, is to the spirit which dwells with it,—dust, which must return to the dust whence it was taken, while the spirit shall return to the God who gave it,

and who, in a new and better economy, prepares for it a new and better body.

Pascal was a sectary, as we all are ; but, without withdrawing from the sect to which he may be said to have belonged, he surpassed it. The substance, with him, prevailed over the form, the spirit ruled the body. Will you permit me to say that it was so, in some degree, with all those who, sharing the same particular views with him, were united by the heart to the living principle of truth ? They all, in this, surpassed themselves, and were only attached to their sect by the inferior parts of their spirits. But for independence, ingenuousness of thought, no one of them can be compared with Pascal ; whether it be that he enunciates views which his friends would have disavowed, and which they did in fact disavow more than once by suppressing them ; or that he enriched their theology by bold and new points of view ; or, lastly, that he strikes afresh their peculiar ideas with the deep die of his genius, and still more that of his soul.

To bring together, to fuse into one another theology and religion, speculation and feeling, is what, perhaps, most markedly characterises Pascal in the positive part of his demonstration. Also, this *Apology* is quite full of the apologist, I mean, of his impressions ; for the book is neither selfish nor egotistical in the slightest degree. Pascal could not have said, at least he would not have said in the same sense as Montaigne : “I have taken myself for my argument and my object ; I have no more made my book than my book has made me, a book consubstantial with its author, a portion of my life.” Nothing could have more repelled Pascal than what displeased him most in Montaigne, the abundance

of personal details and domestic confidences. Whether from pride or from humility, Pascal never spoke of himself. His book is subjective rather than personal. It is not abstract truth that he sets before us, but truth concocted in a human heart; truth completed, realised by its moral effects; truth in that incarnation, of which the incarnation of the Word was the pledge and the foundation. Here it might be truly said: The voice is not entire but in the echo. It would be going much too far to assert that all theology, all apologetics, are a drama or a confession; but how much is it to be regretted that it is not even so! Is a writer sufficiently instructive, sufficiently clear, when he is not touching? And how much more touching is a person than an idea, be that idea as touching as it may!

This character of personality, but of a personality wholly spiritual, is recognised and felt in every page of the book. Everywhere it marks it in a more or less lively manner; but sometimes emotion mingles with the thought to such an extent as to turn it from its course, and to make us conclude that several of these movements would have been suppressed in a conclusive revision. The following is a sufficiently remarkable example:

“I find, in point of fact, that, as far as the memory of man extends, it has been constantly announced to men that they are in a state of corruption, but that a regenerator is to come.

“That it is not one man who says this, but a multitude of men, and a whole people, during four thousand years, prophesying and constituted expressly for this purpose. These books dispersed for four hundred years.

“Thus I stretch my arms towards my Deliverer, who, having been foretold during four thousand years, came to suffer

and die for me upon the earth, at the time and in all the circumstances which had been predicted for Him ; and by His grace I look for death in peace, in the hope of being for ever united to Him ; yet I live with joy, whether in the good which it pleases Him to give me, or in the evils which He sends me for my good, and which He has taught me to suffer by His example.” (II. 197.)

“ I love poverty, because Jesus Christ loved it. I love wealth, because it gives me the means of succouring the wretched. I keep faith with all men. I return not evil to those who do me wrong ; but I desire for them a condition like to my own, in which they might not receive either evil or good from men. I endeavour to be just, truthful, sincere, and faithful to all men ; and I have tenderness of heart for those whom God has united to me more closely ; and whether I be alone or in the sight of men, I have in all my doings regard to God, who is to judge them, and to whom I have consecrated them all.

“ Such are my feelings ; and every day of my life I bless my Redeemer, who has inspired me with them, and who, from a man full of weakness, misery, lust, pride, and ambition, has made me a man exempt from all these evils by the power of His grace, to which all the glory is due, as of myself I have nought but misery and error.” (I. 243.)

It is almost unnecessary to quote the well-known dialogue which closes with these words :—

“ This discourse transports me, ravishes me.

“ — If this discourse pleases you, and seems to you to be strong, know that it is made by a man who knelt, before and after it, to pray to this Being, infinite and without parts, to whom he submits all that is his, that he would submit

also to Himself all that is yours, for your good and His glory, and that thus its force is in proportion to humility." (II. 169.)

It was perhaps in order to provide a freer course for these outflowings of an impressed heart, not less than for the purpose of being more dramatic and more agreeable, that Pascal, who had succeeded so well in the employment of the epistolary style in his quarrel with the Jesuits, had resolved, as his manuscripts show, to put his *Apology* into the form of a correspondence.

This Book of Theology is, then, what books of theology are not always, a book of piety, and almost an ascetic work. But it is, notwithstanding, in the true sense of the word, a book of theology. Shall I attempt to say what theology it teaches? Jansenist in its foundation, it has taken from the Jansenist doctrine the flower, or, if you please, the purest wheat. In it the sovereign grace of God is continually adored, and above all blessed; and never perhaps was homage rendered to it, for which human liberty had less cause to lament or to be alarmed. There is a mystery of election, since there are elect ones. But Jesus Christ died for all men; all men have been redeemed. There is nothing in the matter that is unfathomable but the love of God. This love has its sole cause in itself; for, at the last day, the reprobate will find in their reason the justification of the sentence which condemns them, and the elect alone will be astonished at the decree which beatifies them. Grace is not an isolated fact, but a perpetual effusion, a circulation of life between the members—that is to say, created spirits—and the Head, which is God, the Father of spirits. In the spiritual sense, as in the temporal sense, the creature is continually created. The

name of this divine life is love. God communicates His love, which is His life. As we become members of God, we become members one of another, but voluntary members, and by an act of will continually renewed. We are neither absorbed in the Head, nor in the whole; for love is not less the triumph of personality than the means and the consummation of unity. Taught by the Gospel his misery and his greatness, man learns from the Gospel to love and to hate himself. He derives also from the Gospel a hatred and a love of death, which the natural man hates unjustly in one sense, and does not love sufficiently in another. He learns equally, without giving in to the impiety of dualism, to recognise in nature the traces of a good and an evil principle. But the second of these two principles is himself. He comprehends that in nature all is not rigour and chastisement; for we should have been too strongly tempted to blasphemy; but, in the moral condition into which sin has plunged us, he understands suffering better than pleasure; and misfortune appears to him the natural state of sinful man.

This theology has been reproached as too sad. It is true that the portrait of man, and the picture of his condition, are not flattering in the book of the *Thoughts*. Is it natural melancholy? Is it Jansenism? We care little what may be thought of it. What is evident to us, and what appears to us very difficult to deny, is that St Paul, St John, and their Master before them, have not spoken of man or of human destiny in more favourable terms than Pascal has done in his *Thoughts*. This requires neither development nor proofs. If any one maintains that the Gospel is not pessimist, we refrain from answering him, and permit him to make such use of our silence as he may. We remark only

that man is pessimist, if Christianity be not. Man does not dislike to be told of the unhappiness of his lot. In detail, and from hour to hour, we are all pessimists, and it would be difficult to catch in the fact of contentment. Madame de la Vallière, in her cloistral solitude, said to her visitors, "I am not joyful, but I am contented." We are not at bottom, and ordinarily, either joyful or contented. In theory, and taking account of the universe, we find that all goes not amiss ; and pessimists in fact, we are indignant against pessimists. The doctrine of optimism has its zealous defenders, and with good reason, in a certain sense. Pascal himself was an optimist in the sense to which we allude. He believed, as we do, in perfectibility, in progress ; but the happiness in which he had faith, as we have, was in his eyes a superficial, relative happiness ; and he believed, on the other hand, in a profound, radical, universal misery of human nature,—a misery of which the impalpable and immaterial portion is, in his eyes, the true misery. The grief of Pascal is wholly intellectual and moral. The disorders and the calamities of this world above all afflict his thought. They are to him a stumbling-block, rather than a subject for complaint. I do not refer you to those singular pages on *Amusement*, and on *Deceptive Influences*, in which the sublime and the grotesque elbow each other ; I would only have you pay attention to the magnificent and celebrated piece on the *disproportion* of man. There, the misfortune of man is not to know or to find his place, to feel himself at once nothing with respect to the infinite, and infinite with respect to nothingness. The infinite and nothingness,—these two infinites,—oppress his thought ; and he walks between these two abysses with his eyes shut, choosing rather to be blind than

to be dazzled. In the infinite is the reason and the sense of the finite, and the infinite is inaccessible to us. We know nothing absolutely ; and that is to know nothing ; and all our knowledge is but a “learned ignorance,” which consists, according to the statement of the ancient philosopher, in “knowing that we know nothing.” If Pascal has proposed to reckon this among the number of our misfortunes, there is much reason to say, borrowing his bold language, “Miseries of a great lord !” This passage, of which the intention is not very certain, is, besides, not at all necessary to prove the wholly spiritualistic tendency of his thought, and the elevated character of his pessimism.

But if the true religion is pessimist, pessimism is not the whole of that religion; it ought to terminate in contentment, and even in joy. This has been denied with respect to that of Pascal. This denial would have more weight if those who have made it could be supposed to know what is Christian joy, born of tears, and, even to the last, watered with them. They are at the antipodes from Pascal, and see another heaven, if indeed they see any heaven. Pascal would not have disputed with them either about impressions or tastes ; for these are not matters for dispute. He would willingly have granted to them that Christian joy, which does not exclude gaiety, is not absolutely gay ; that Christian happiness, taken in its essence, is not without melancholy ; and that, born in a sublime sadness, it loves to return to its origin. All great Christian thinkers have deserved the same reproach with Pascal. Those who have not deserved it, may well be regarded as having diluted Christianity. Jansenism is not the only cause at work here. The Jesuit Bourdaloue, the Sulpician Fenelon, the oratorian Massillon,

and lastly Bossuet, the oracle of all, have received no other lessons at the foot of the cross, and have given no other. The dispute, therefore, is with all these great men, with all the great Christian writers. Pascal, at need, might shelter himself behind them, and we shelter ourselves behind Pascal.

We are not obliged to vindicate all the bitter or exclusive words which may have escaped him. We adopt Pascal the Christian, not the sectarian. All reform is exclusive, and Jansenism was a reform. Moreover, it was not without injury to him that he was a Catholic ; and the religion of the Catholic oscillates continually between a subtle sensualism and an extravagant asceticism. The Jansenist asceticism overbore all that is most primitive and most innocent in human life. It denied, so far as possible, the family ; and Pascal, on this point, is but too much a Jansenist. In this he is less a *man* that he aimed at being, and wished that others should be. M. Reuchlin remarks, with astonishment, that the *family* is not even named in the book of the *Thoughts*. Pascal blamed himself for his tenderness for his relatives, forbade himself the smallest endearments with them, and sought to substitute for them in his heart the great family of the human race. He considered all transient relations as unworthy of the interest, and even of the regards, of the Christian. This view, little evangelical, must have confirmed him in his indifference for civil society ; but this indifference originated in a scepticism which study would perhaps have cured. Pascal's disdain for history and for books, bears, in this respect, some bitter fruits. In the school of his friend Domat, he would have learned, I am fond of believing, that there is a social truth, and that this truth, of which

he has acknowledged the existence in the fourteenth *Provincial*, is being painfully but continually disengaged from the chaos in which our passions have buried it, and gains ground insensibly in progressive societies. The first link will always fail, and therefore the chain drags on the earth. We cannot with surety set out but from God; and we set out from ourselves, whether it be that we proclaim, instead of the divine right of the eternal reason, the divine right of chance or the divine right of number. But because God has not completely abandoned us, and because necessity has secret relations with truth,—the truth, which, in social matters, is honesty, justice, and liberty,—the truth, from which individuals can but too easily disenthral themselves,—subjects society by slow degrees to its Divine laws, which, moreover, the Gospel has published with entirely new authority. By reason of despising the social institution, by reason of admiring the good sense of the people, which makes up for the want of good sense in the institutions and the laws, Pascal plays the game of the anarchists, for whom he professes the most decided hatred. Faith in social progress is a guarantee of order no less than of progress. What is called political atheism is, in its sphere, doubtless a much lower one, what religious atheism is in another sphere.

## VI.

ON THE PYRRHONISM OF PASCAL, AND ON HIS  
PERSONAL RELIGION.

THE Pyrrhonism of Pascal, or at least what people have been pleased to call so, has been the subject of many attacks. If we understand Pyrrhonism in its strict sense, as a denial of first principles (and it is thus that Pascal defines it), Pascal was not a Pyrrhonist; for he has defended, in opposition to this sect, the existence of first principles. But it must be admitted that it was not till after he had been so identified with the principal arguments of Pyrrhonism, that it might well have been believed that Pascal was a partisan of this sect, that, notwithstanding, he calls it *extravagant*. It must be admitted further, that, in the chapter on justice, he speaks at one time the language of Pyrrhonism (and this time without retracting it), when he asks if our natural principles respecting justice are aught else than our accustomed principles, and if nature be not simply a first custom. It may be supposed, indeed, that the principles of which he speaks are not the first notions of right and wrong, but those secondary rules, which certainly vary from one country to another. But the distinction is not expressed, and advantage may be taken of this silence. For my part, I think that, preoccupied with the desire of humbling reason, Pascal has not introduced into this first sketch of a work, of which perhaps nothing would have been preserved, all the exact-

ness and niceties of expression which this matter, more than any other, required. He has not always measured his strokes ; and the long acquaintance which he had with Montaigne, whom he incessantly quotes and transcribes, had given his mind a bent which he did not always resist. The period turned towards Pyrrhonism ; and perhaps it has not been sufficiently noted that the work of Descartes was a reaction of methodical doubt against the irregular and unbridled doubt with which the books of the period were filled. That Pascal may have contracted, in the cultivation of the exact sciences and of the sciences of observation, a habit of strictness which made him less sensible to demonstrations of another order—in other words, that geometry may have disposed him to scepticism—it is easy to conceive. Then it was a pretty general idea among Christian philosophers, that Pyrrhonism was useful to religion. Pascal himself has said in this sense, it is true, that a great good may come out of a great evil. But, in short, it was an error even to believe so great an error to be profitable to the truth; and, in one way or other, Pascal appears to me to have fallen into it.

Others, less great than he no doubt, have fallen into it in our days. But Pascal, if he erred, erred only respecting the fact, and they have erred respecting the right. They have done more than believe in the relative utility of Pyrrhonism ; they have loftily professed it, and have proposed to give for a foundation to the Christian faith the moving sand of absolute doubt. From absolute doubt they have proposed to come to the conclusion of absolute dogmatism ; on which subject I shall state all that I think in a few words. In like manner as “I shun a brazen-faced man who preaches modesty,” I hate, “as the gates of hell,” the

Pyrrhonism which dogmatises. The conclusion that it permits itself to reach, whatever it may be, is exorbitant, monstrous ; for it is a conclusion. Its faith is, at the best, but a stroke of despair, an accident, a catastrophe. Between Pyrrhonism and faith, there is a whole infinity. It is a strange rashness to begin by breaking all the steps of the ladder by which we propose to climb ; it is a strange insolence to attempt to prove anything whatever after having annihilated all the elements of proof. The modern Pyrrhonists, dogmatists in the bottom of their hearts, have invented and kept in reserve an element of certainty, one only, universal consent. But even this element they have not been able to obtain but by making use of all the others, and consequently by supposing them all. I have no occasion, after this, to inquire with what success they have established universal consent with respect to any point. I do not inquire if their system, invented as they tell us for the benefit of Christianity, do not give the lie to that religion, making truth the secret of the few, and for all others an absurdity. I ask not, lastly, if the doctrine of universal consent is not the most murderous, though the most indirect, attack on the dignity of man, the holiness of God, and even on morality. Enceladus, crushed under his smoking mountain, tells more of it than I can tell. Pyrrhonism is self-condemned.

M. Reuchlin has said that Pascal, climbing on the shoulders of Montaigne in order to assail with greater effect the enemies of religion, is a striking proof of the support that the faith may find from its natural enemies, incredulity and scepticism ; and he compares them to those demons which, in the architecture of the middle ages, sup-

port, so to speak, the bold spring of the vault of the temple towards another vault, which is heaven. All well for the stone demons; but Pascal would not knowingly have called any of the supports of falsehood to the aid of truth. Even while admitting that Pyrrhonism had been advantageous to religion, he disavowed it. A Pyrrhonist was, in his opinion, an extravagant person. But how could he have avoided showing us into what dangers we are thrown, or in what dangers we are left, by logic, "that blind thing," as a celebrated writer lately called it, whose two eyes are put out when the soul and immediate intuition do not concur with it? It is to this immediate intuition, as to certain information, that Pascal sends us, in the paragraph on the heart, which I read to you the day before yesterday, and which I took upon me to call Pascal's *last word* on the subject.\* It is so in fact, and how could it be otherwise? It is evidently an answer to the Pyrrhonist arguments that are spread over the book of the *Thoughts*. It is intentionally so, it is evident; and no one will believe, on the other hand, that it is an objection against Pyrrhonism, to which the Pyrrhonist ideas spread over the book are to serve as an answer. I say even, that in whatever place Pascal may have put it, before or after the Pyrrhonist arguments, the tenor of this paragraph shows its intention. It is an answer, and a conclusive answer. I have not now to prove that the answer is good. I think it excellent. But people will judge of it according to their lights. It is sufficient for me that it is an answer, and that, by this answer, Pascal considers that he has saved first principles, that is to say, the first elements upon which thought operates. This includes all, gentlemen;

\* See pp. 133, 134.

for as to reasoning or logic, Pascal believes in it. A thousand and a thousand passages attest it. Those that I have quoted would suffice. One would suffice, that, namely, in which Pascal makes the dignity of man consist in thought, which is nought else than the means or organ of knowledge. But, at the same time, it is very true that Pascal made a rude onslaught on human reason; that he taxes it with impotence, since it does not know what would most import it to know, and with insolence, since it pretends to know and comprehend everything. This impotence afflicts, this insolence irritates him; and in the liveliness of his feelings he is carried on to exaggerate his own thought, and glides more than once towards Pyrrhonism. This kind of vehemence of thought is sufficiently marked, and gives us a presentiment of the possibility of some extravagances in the following passage:—

“Reason is sufficiently reasonable to confess that she has not yet been able to find anything solid; but she does not despair of yet attaining to it. On the contrary, she is as ardent as ever in this research, and supposes that she has in herself the powers necessary for this conquest. *We must then have done with her;* and after having examined her powers in their effects, let us judge what they are in themselves: let us see if she has any powers and any resources capable of laying hold of truth.” (II. 125.)

We do not perceive here a man restraining himself, but rather a man warming in the struggle. Pascal has thrown all his fire into those fragments, where, it cannot be too often repeated, he is still rather searching for his thought than enunciating it. He went to excess in the direction of the objections which may be made to human reason. All,

for some moments, was good for him, provided he could bring reason to his feet. Hence in his book there are dangerous assertions, contradictions. But though he had been, which we do not admit, stronger in what he alleges in favour of Pyrrhonism than in what he alleges against this sect, we say, nevertheless, that personally he is no Pyrrhonist. However badly he has defended his cause, it is clearly seen that his cause is not Pyrrhonism. I beg you to observe, gentlemen, that this is the important, the capital point; since, however badly Pascal may have defended dogmatism, if he is a dogmatist, that is sufficient to exclude absolutely the idea that Pyrrhonism threw him into religion, and that his conversion was, as some have thought, only the shipwreck of his reason.

There is one thing which is too much forgotten. It is, that faith in the Gospel implies little faith in the teachings of pure reason. The Gospel is not given as a brighter light added to our natural lights, but as a torch which comes to dissipate our darkness, and as the day taking the place of the night. It not only presupposes, but declares, that all men were wandered, and that none of them had understanding, not even one. No one believes in the Gospel without believing that before the Gospel humanity was in darkness, and in darkness all the more dangerous that it was, at distances, streaked with gleams of light which encouraged man to go abroad, whereas a deeper and more impenetrable darkness would have constrained him to remain at home, and would have kept him far from the abysses. It is a remarkable fact, and ought not to be omitted, that the Gospel, by its light, exercises a retrospective influence on the past darkness. It renders it visible to us. The man who, before

being a Christian, believed himself sure of many things, learns thenceforth what was the value of this assurance, in some sort gratuitous and anticipative. He becomes sceptical afterhand, not in the present, but in the past. There are, as it were, arrears of scepticism to pay. The matter is not about the question of more or less. Christianity finds us or makes us sceptical with respect to many things. The question is, What are these things ? What is *not* one of them is, that the Christian faith no more leads to Pyrrhonism than it can set out from it. Repeating ourselves in these terms, we shall say a thing which will appear singular only at the first instant. It is said that scepticism made Pascal a Christian ; it would perhaps be more correct to say that Christianity rendered him sceptical.

But Pascal, it is said, doubted of the existence of God. He has said that, according to the lights of nature, we cannot certainly know either what God is, or whether He is. *A fortiori* he doubted of the immortality of the soul, which has no solid support but in the belief of a God.

We must begin here by setting aside the question of Pyrrhonism. Whatever idea we may form of scepticism in this matter, or even of atheism, an atheist, so far as he is an atheist, is not a Pyrrhonist. He is much worse, you will say. Or you will say, that when one has attained to be an atheist, he may just as well take another step in advance and plunge into absolute Pyrrhonism. I do not think so ; but I make the supposition. It is enough for me, in this matter, to have put Pyrrhonism out of court.

I do not mean to examine more closely whether Pascal was really sceptical with respect to the existence of God.

If you wished absolutely to know what I think on the subject, I should say that I believe that Pascal, apart from the lights of Christianity, believed in the existence of a God, and in the body of doctrines which constitute what is called natural religion. But I cannot give you strict proof of this ; and what, on the other hand, is certain, is that he declares that he did not find, either in nature or in metaphysics, reasons sufficiently strong to convince hardened atheists. Let us suppose the worst ; that Pascal was an atheist.

If he was, it was a misfortune. If he was, we may be astonished at it. Still it is right here to make some observations, which, without serving as an excuse for so prodigious an error, explain its existence in the world.

To know that a thing is, without knowing what it is, is very often to know nothing. Separated from its mode, existence is but a word. And according to the mode which is assigned to it, an existence is anything, or it is nothing. To believe in the existence of God, without forming any idea of the attributes of God, would be to believe in the word *God*, rather than in the existence of God. To believe in the existence of God, and not to believe in the personality, the sovereignty, the righteousness of God, decidedly is not to believe in God. To believe in the existence of God and to doubt as to His essential attributes, is to doubt even as to the existence of God. Lastly, to believe in God, but to be incapable of deriving any practical consequence from the belief, is, if you please, to believe in God, but it is to be without God. On this ground, you will perhaps be obliged to admit that belief in God, a firm, energetic, real belief, is not quite so common as is supposed.

A second observation. We believe in the existence of

God. We believe in it with a real, firm, energetic faith. But who are we who believe in this sort, but the disciples, voluntary or involuntary, of Christianity ? For Christianity has disciples of both kinds. But what were the common notions on this important subject before Christianity ? What are they now, apart from Christianity ? If we could ourselves, for an instant, divest ourselves of the impressions which we have received from Christianity, and shut out all informations on this subject but those of nature and pure reason, to what would our assurances be reduced ? What would be the strength or the clearness of our convictions respecting natural religion ? Should we know more respecting those matters than the philosophers of antiquity knew ? And what did they know ?

A third observation. The truths of this order have been, according to M. Cousin, admirably proved. By whom ? By men trained in the school of Christianity. But, be this as it may, they behoved to be proved. If their demonstrations are admirable, that means, doubtless, that they have put forth great power, which necessarily supposes a great resistance. It was necessary then to prove these truths, and to prove them at great expense of argument. What a humiliation ! It has been requisite to prove to man, to man the most learned, the best organised, that he is not self-created ; and the will, the intelligence, the faculty of loving which he finds in himself, attest the existence of a Supreme intelligence, will, and love. When these things require to be proved, are they ever well proved ?—I mean, are they rendered evident, actual ? And however strong be the proof, does it ever produce the effect of rendering the object present, near, sensible to us ? And if it is not—I mean, if it

does not put God into the heart—shall we not too easily find in the fascinations of abstract dialectics (for dialectics, too, have their fascinations) a thousand ways of escaping from this truth, or, if you please, of divesting ourselves of it? Is logic never at issue with logic? And can we surely foresee a termination of the struggle, unless the good sense of the heart interpose as arbitrator? And has the heart always good sense? Is not the heart often defective?

Ponder all this well, ye who speak of the atheism of Pascal. It was not what you suppose. This atheism was nought else than a profound feeling of the insufficiency of reason, without the aid of the heart, to procure for itself, by itself, I do not say an abstract certainty of the existence of a God, but the knowledge of God, the possession of God. I say the possession, because, according to Pascal, we know God only if we possess Him; at all events, the knowledge of God without the possession of God is useless and barren. Though you had succeeded in convincing Pascal that man is capable of a certain kind of knowledge of God, he would have added: “What matters it? Apart from Jesus Christ, this knowledge is illusory and vain. Paul said to the Ephesians, with the temple of Diana and the statues of a thousand divinities before him, *Ye are without God*. So I say to humanity, so I say to the followers of natural religion; for their god also is but an idol.” That this exclamation should revolt those who believe in the sufficiency of natural religion, is very simple. The only astonishing thing is, that they believe in this sufficiency. But that it should offend those who, like M. Cousin, profess to believe in Christianity, that is what surpasses my comprehension. What is Christianity, in this reckoning? Would they have the goodness

to tell us? Would they please to give us a reason for what it contains that is tragical, and, I venture to say, violent?

I am willing that, at present, no account be taken of the preceding observations, and that Pascal be considered an atheist. What is it proposed to conclude from this?

That despair threw him into Christianity? Is it supposed that we are to be much alarmed by this conclusion? What is the meaning of the word *despair*? Nothing else than a deep feeling of the insufficiency of atheism. Truly, as atheism is represented to us, this despair is not astonishing. But, is it meant to be concluded that, being ill at ease in atheism, Pascal had no right to become a Christian, and that a Christianity which took its root in the grief of being an atheist is not a Christianity of a good sort? The conclusion would be strange. Every conversion from one doctrine to another, whether in religion or even in philosophy, would be in like manner irregular, null, and unallowed by reason.

For, be pleased to consider that it is almost only in the mathematical and observational sciences that the change from one doctrine or another would be legitimate on these terms, and even in these it would not always be so. M. Schœnbein did not, I suppose, find it any unhappiness to believe till last year that azote is an element. This conviction did not drive him to despair; he did not sigh for the moment of deliverance from it; his heart and its necessities did not drive him to the doctrine according to which azote itself is capable of decomposition. If we can suppose a case in which a doctrine of this kind is desired before it is proved, this depends upon circumstances foreign to the subject, and is an exception. But this exception is

the rule,—the constant fact in religion, in politics, and, more or less, in philosophy. All these things affect man deeply, and touch him to the quick. It is not by his mind only, but by his heart, that he aspires in these matters to truth, to certainty. Opinions of this kind may render him happy or unhappy. If he find himself unhappy, he looks elsewhere. “With wandering eyes . . . he sought for light ;” and too often it must be added, “and when ’twas found, lamented.” Atheism, you say, and we say too, is an unfortunate doctrine, and the impression which certain souls receive from it may be easily intensified into despair. They desire that the truth should be different ; and it is on that side that their looks and their studies turn. But you come up, you, inflexible defender of scientific loyalty, and you say, “Hold there ! a desired result is no result. There can be no research, since the heart is a partisan. It is with the reason alone that researches must be made. A perfect disinterestedness, a supreme indifference, are the conditions of strictness. When you are sufficiently indifferent, sufficiently dry, sufficiently dead, you are able to examine. Green wood gives smoke.”

The consequence is sufficiently obvious. Whoever has begun with despair, or at least with grief, is incapable of examining, and has not even the right to examine. You must have no desire, or you must remain where you are. Jesus Christ knew less of the matter than these philosophers ; He who summoned His disciples around Him in the name of happiness. The word *blessed* is the first that comes from His mouth (Matt. v. 3). It should have been the last. What is to be done, since, in short, it is impossible to approach religious questions without the heart

being interested in them? What is to be done, if we cannot prove that a faithful examination may follow a lively desire?

Mark well. It is not the sufferings of the intellect that cause us to be so ill at ease in atheism. The mere discontent of the mind would not be sufficient to make us escape from it. A little uncertainty or obscurity on a purely speculative question, would not render minds of an ordinary cast so impatient. And why do we weary of the flat horizon of natural religion? It is not because it is flat, but because it is barren. The want of nourishment is more imperious than the want of the picturesque. A great number of men have put themselves on the road towards Christianity, only because they were hungry, and as it were famished in deism; and after having cropped it to the root, hunger has made them cry after another pasture. They have, you say, no right to seek other nourishment, because they have desired it; that is to say, that because they are hungry, that is a reason why they should die of hunger. This reasoning is above our reach. We understand this other better: Eat, since you are hungry, but do not eat poison. In other words, you cannot prevent yourselves desiring, but we conjure you to examine.

Despair alone does not make Christians, but despair may open the paths towards the truth. Desire is not an argument; but it is not an evil that God has given to truth the figure of happiness. He has anointed with honey the rim of the medicinal cup. Do you haply find that He ought to have anointed it with gall? Perhaps you would have done so, ye Stoic souls; but God is no Stoic. No; you say, neither gall nor honey; nothing at all. Oh, philosophers,

ye know everything except humanity ! But God knows it. Leave Him alone.

Is it that perchance (for it is sometimes what is not said that chiefly requires to be answered)—is it that perchance it might have been wished that Pascal had made a halt in natural religion, instead of passing boldly from atheism to Christianity, or, in some sort, from one extreme to the other ? It is possible that some who were atheists have become deists, and even have remained such. There are others for whom there is nothing between the two extremes, and whom Christianity alone, by what is special in it, has had the strength to withdraw from the embraces of atheism. The pause which you demand of them, they have not been free to make. And, after all, why should they have made it, if they have not found in the arguments and in the principles of deism wherewithal to satisfy the wants of their mind and heart, and if Christianity, on the other hand, has fully satisfied these wants ? If you, who make this objection to them, are not Christians, you may lament for them for having been carried too far ; but when you lament for them, you can understand them. But if, on the contrary, you are Christians, how can it be that you should make this objection to them ? For, if you have become Christians, it is because you could not be contented with theism ; it is because this position did not, or does not, appear to you to be tenable, and because you have found the true theism, with its reality, its substance, and its life, only in the bosom and under the form of Christianity. At what, then, are you astonished ? Or what kind of Christianity do you profess, if you can be astonished ?

At bottom, Pascal has made this pause which is demanded

of him. He has made it in thought. He has tried natural religion, and has found this frail bark unfit to carry humanity. Seeing it sinking under him, he has hastened to pass into another vessel; that is to say, that theism, like atheism, has disappointed him. Always despair, you say. But let us have done with this singular reproach. In fact, what is it to you whether I have begun with despair or not? Am I obliged to render you an account of the matter? I was only responsible to you, or rather to myself, to examine. Have I done so? That is the question. And to return to Pascal; has Pascal examined? Has Pascal been convinced? Has Pascal become a Christian by conviction? Or has Pascal thrown himself into the faith as into a dark abyss? Has his conversion been nought but a suicide of his reason?

I appeal on this point to all who have read the *Thoughts*, to all who are acquainted with the life of Pascal. They will tell us if Pascal were convinced. Better still, perhaps, will those tell us who owe to him that they are convinced, that they are, like him, set free from despair, or that a serious but calm curiosity attracted them to the reading of his *Apology*.

But I should do wrong were I to stop here. I have supposed Pascal an atheist; I have supposed him in despair; and I have intimated that it was not only his thought, but his heart, that suffered in those polar regions of the moral world. I must dwell upon this point; for neither friends nor enemies have dwelt sufficiently upon it.

Some will see nothing in Pascal but the despair of the thought, the distresses of an intellect hungering for truth, eager for knowledge.

It is a mistake to suppose that in Christianity Pascal sought only a pillow to rest his weary head. His life and his writ-

ings suggest to us a different judgment. Pascal, writing an apology, or, if you will, a demonstration of Christianity, has given so much space to the description of the troubles of the intellect, that people have been led to suppose that he was only recounting his own history, and that it was his whole history. But his book, however full it be of himself, is one thing, and his life is another. That he panted more painfully than others under the oppression of doubt, that uncertainty, as such, was more insupportable to him than to many others, and that the desire of knowledge had with him almost as much intensity as the love of happiness can have with the generality of men,—I admit. But Pascal was conscious of nobler wants. His soul thirsted for righteousness still more than his mind thirsted for knowledge. This opens the eyes, or rather this gives eyes. He had thenceforth, to assure him of the truth of the Gospel, a *sense* which may be wanting to the most intelligent, the most gifted. He knew thenceforth that truth and life are not two things,—that there is a substantial truth, and that that alone is truth. Thus those things were taught him “which have not entered into the heart of man, and which God reveals to those who love Him.” He had part in the blessing promised to those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness.”

If Pascal threw himself into an abyss, it was into that of holiness. The *nothingness* which he fled from is sin; the darkness which confounded him was the outer darkness, which is black only from the absence of God. He saw light where he saw love, and it is properly into love that he threw himself. He is represented as drawn by despair into the faith as into a dark cavern; I see him drawn irresistibly toward the beauty of God.

It is not enough for an illustrious writer that Pascal, in his opinion, became a Christian to have done with it, and as a sort of last resort. He does not admit even that he found rest in the faith. We are told cursorily of the “unquiet and unhappy faith which he undertakes to communicate to men like himself.” Seek for it, this unquiet and unhappy faith, for yourselves and all those whom you love. This is all that I should say; for how is it possible to answer such an assertion? We wait for proofs; we want to know the passages, the acts, in which Pascal’s faith shows itself to be unquiet and unhappy. We have not yet been able to discover them. We keep silence till M. Cousin speak. He has spoken, gentlemen. He informs us that there escape from the author of the *Thoughts*, in the midst of the attacks of his *convulsive devotion*, cries of misery and despair. This convulsive devotion is apparently those returns upon the past, those regrets, those sobs, those tremblings, those prayers perhaps, which we had taken for the usual characteristics of the sublime reaction of the new man against the old man: these are all his convulsions. As for those cries, you are perhaps still more embarrassed, and you ask in what part of his book they are heard. Oh, what incredible deafness, or what an unpractised ear! What? Have you not read in Pascal this confounding expression: “The eternal silence of these infinite spaces frightens me?” (I. 224); and this other: “How many kingdoms know nothing of us?” (I. 224.) And this other still: “How hollow is the heart of man, and how full of uncleanness?” (II. 31.) Is this sufficiently clear? There is, truly, here only one thing manifest. It is the sway of prejudice over the best minds. And why should not Pascal, speaking as a man and not as

a Christian, stating the impressions which are natural to all contemplative minds not settled by Christianity, have said that he could not bear the eternal silence of these infinite spaces? The God of Christians, the God of Pascal, animates with His voice, peoples with His presence, that infinite solitude of which Pascal here speaks to us with so eloquent terror. It is admirable, it is just what he ought to have said. Why, in the same point of view, should not the author of the *Thoughts* have cried, "How many realms are ignorant of us!" Leave him, then, to humble at his pleasure this creature whom, in good time, he is to magnify so prodigiously before you; for this caitiff being, whom the worlds know not, God knows him, and God takes care of him. Why, lastly, should Pascal be afraid to call hollow and full of uncleanness that heart of man, of which a prophet has said, with more energy than Pascal, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked?" By what right, when the question is about a book whose author places himself by turns in the most different points of view,—by what right lay hold of an isolated expression, of which the destination is unknown, as well as the date, in order to pronounce that this is the conclusive condition of the soul of its author, and the last result of all his thinking? We think we recollect that it was four lines that a famous politician asked as enough to hang any one that he pleased. M. Cousin requires but one to condemn the faith of Pascal.

What gives the most handle to criticism, I will even say to blame, in this volume of Pascal, is the piece entitled by the author himself, *Of Infinity—Nothing*. To explain this title is to give account of the piece. Wagering against Christianity, there is *infinity* to lose if Christianity is true,

*nothing to lose if Christianity is not true.\* You will find the same idea under another form in La Bruyère. If Pascal and La Bruyère had proposed to make the choice between Christianity and infidelity a pure matter of calculation, assuredly they were wrong. If they have spoken in such a way as to give grounds for ascribing to them such an idea, still they are wrong ; and I believe that they cannot be absolutely defended from this latter reproach. But it seems to me difficult for a man convinced of Christianity, and earnestly desiring to gather all men under the same shadow, not to find himself, at one time or another, drawn towards ideas which will not be without resemblance to those of Pascal and La Bruyère. "What do you lose (he will say) by being a Christian ? What evil will come of it ? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, beneficent, a sincere friend, truthful. True, you will not be in sinful pleasures, in glory, or in luxury. But will you not have other pleasures ? I tell you that you will be a gainer in this life ; for no one is so happy as the true Christian. What, then, do you lose by being a Christian ? Nothing at all. But what do you lose by not being a Christian, in case that Christianity be true ? Infinity."*

It will not be said that this reasoning is bad as reasoning, but it will be asked if it is specifically applicable. That it is advantageous to believe, we admit freely ; but do we believe anything because it is advantageous to believe it ? We believe it because it is true, or because it appears to be true. We have stated in what situation we should regard the man as placed with whom Pascal is dealing in the chapter of which we speak. He is a man whom his heart

\* See Appendix, Note U.

bears towards the Gospel, who cannot help seeing in the Gospel the repose and the rule of his life; but who has been stopped on the threshold, and for a long time, by invincible doubts. It is to this man that Pascal addresses himself, and whom he charges, not to believe, but to act as if he believed, to live as a Christian before he thinks as a Christian. It is as if he said to him: An element of conviction escapes you, and it is not within the range of your reason, which evidently is at its end, and understands no further. Enter, and you will see from within what you cannot see from without. Practise Christianity, and you shall know it. But how will this lead me to Christianity? asks the inquirer. "To show you that it leads you thitherward," answers Pascal, "it is because it lessens the passions, which are your great obstacles," etc. (II. 169.) One more infallible than Pascal had given the same counsel in terms that we have quoted to you. (John vii. 17.) It is true that when Pascal comes to the details, he separates from his divine model; for Jesus Christ would not have said, Take holy water, cause masses to be said. Jesus Christ is wiser than Pascal. He only counsels us to do, experimentally, what in itself is good and obligatory,—what we ought to do even if Christianity were not true. Pascal has not counselled so well. But, at bottom, what did he mean? What Jesus Christ meant, to regulate the life in order to regulate the mind. Jesus Christ, moreover, did not say, "Naturally, this will lead you to believe, and will *reduce you to the condition of beasts*:" for He would not have added to the difficulty of things by the obscurity of words. But the thought on which Pascal has thrown, as a coarse rag, this strange expression, Jesus Christ Himself, the Divine Teacher, would certainly have approved.

It is at the very foundation of Christianity, which would have us renounce the wisdom of the world for a higher wisdom,—the reason of the reason, for the reason of the *Spirit*, or of the conscience. We must, in a certain way, become fools that we may be wise; that is to say, to express it more simply, reason must be humbled before things that have not entered into the heart of man, which God has prepared for those who love Him. Love opens the mind to thoughts so high, so new, that they must seem foolishness to those who do not receive them.

## VII.

## THE PROVINCIALS OF PASCAL.

THE history of the *Provincials*, the analysis of the work, and numerous quotations, have furnished us with the principal elements of that summary estimate of them, which you doubtless expect at the close of this study. I have already, by several general observations, anticipated this conclusion. I shall not hesitate to repeat them, in order to collect under one view all that belongs to the same design.

You know in what condition Pascal found language and style. France was then forming her rhetoric, and was preparing forms for her thought, as if in preparation for her thinking. Yet I confess that there was much mind already in circulation, and even much thought. Descartes had already written, in very good French, though perhaps a little Grecianised, the *Discourse on Method*. But, besides that it must be admitted that, in general, thought and speech transacted their business apart and unknown to each other, there was wanting to this language, already beautiful, but with a cold beauty,—there was wanting to this Galatea, if I may venture so to call her, a Pygmalion whose warmth might impart life to her. Thought does much for a language, but passion does more. From passion alone it can receive motion, pliability, and, strange to say, even measure. By its means alone the imposing, perhaps colossal, statue

becomes a living body, a free being which transports itself whithersoever it is commanded to go. I speak of a passion shared, of a public passion, or one fitted to become such : for eloquence is born at once of the sympathy which we experience, and of that which we hope for; you may add, of the opposition which we foresee without fearing it ; for in order to eloquence there needs both friends and enemies, and it can almost as little dispense with the latter as with the former. But what is necessary to the orator in order to his becoming eloquent, is equally necessary to the language of a people in order to its becoming eloquent; I mean eloquent in itself, or suited to eloquence. It is indispensable that passion, a public passion, intervene. There must be actual interests, living questions. All the improvements that it can have received ere then, are of necessity superficial. Its swaddling-clothes may be embroidered, but it is strangled in them. Its movements are painful and heavy. People already write, but they do not speak ; and that form of discourse which is not intended to be poetry, and which yet is not prose (if it be true that the impress of reality is the true stamp of prose), is, as Bossuet says, "a something which has no name in any language."

The author of the *Provincials* found a passion in the public, and, mixing his own with it, he hastened on its course. He gave and received assistance. The full and roaring wave of the public passion increased and drew on his ; his own, more serious and more powerful than that of the public, added ardour to the general pre-occupation. It should not be necessary for us to share this passion in order to comprehend it ; but still we should not comprehend it unless we perceived how grave was the object of it. One

of the most universal faults of every epoch, is not appreciating the pre-occupations of the times which are no more. The questions discussed in the *Provincials* are spoken of as obsolete questions ; but they are not obsolete, and nothing can make them such. There is not, in the debate into which Pascal threw the weight of his genius and of his conviction, anything which is not interesting for all times. The conflict of Dr Arnauld with the Sorbonne; the play of passions and of intrigue in the bosom of that corporation of theologians; the popular passion which is heard hoarsely muttering around the sacred enclosure ; the minority previously condemned, who appeal from the doctoral Areopagus briskly and suddenly to the public, which is constituted into a court of appeal for the second time since its convocation by the Reformers of the sixteenth century,—all this cannot appear indifferent but to those for whom the Fronde, on the other hand, is a serious event and worthy of minute study. Let us dare to say it ; nothing greater occurred in the seventeenth century. The pre-occupations of the public of this epoch were at least as important as ours. And although we had only the three first *Provincials*, I should not speak otherwise. But how much the ground of debate was enlarged by the illustrious pamphleteer ! As to the real gravity of the debate, form the estimate from the whole of his polemics, and not from some words, in which the skilful tactician is displayed rather than the impassioned man. When he says to the adversaries of Port-Royal : “ The principal artifice of your conduct is to make it be believed that all is at stake in a matter which is of no moment,” you may internally answer him ; Yes, all is at stake, and it is yourself that has convinced us of it. Your first letters made us suspect it ; bu

how much more the subsequent ones ! Can we fail to know, after reading these letters, that the question at issue between Port-Royal and its adversaries is only this : in ecclesiastical matters, the question of fact and of right, that is to say, the limits of the infallibility of the holy see ; in theology, grace ; in morals, everything, we mean principles and their applications ?

M. Villemain did not say all, but he said truth, when he declared that “the solitaries of Port-Royal, while appearing to discuss only scholastic subtleties, represented liberty of conscience, the spirit of inquiry, the love of righteousness and of truth.” Even from the point of view of our age, too exclusively pre-occupied with civil liberty, the struggle of Port-Royal and its immortal secretary against an order and against a party who aspired to the government of the state, and knew how to attain it, is worthy, even now, of a lively interest. The tradition of liberty, believe us, is perpetual like that of truth. There is no period at which liberty, which is one of the truths of social order, has not had its representatives and its witnesses. Of what importance are the form and the applications ? The earnest minds of the seventeenth century did not pursue the same liberty that we pursue, or, to speak more properly, they did not, like us, pursue the guarantees of liberty ; but, like us, and perhaps more earnestly than we, they pursued liberty. They drew on the public passion into a field into which it followed them only, I believe, because it had no other ; and we do not risk much in supposing that between questions of theology and political questions, if the choice had been given it, the public would, without much hesitation, have attached itself to the latter. Be it as it may, one arena alone was open to liberty,

which in all times has known how to open for itself one or more. The seventeenth century, thus restricted, it appears to us, at least exercised and prepared itself for liberty by means of religion and literature, which are themselves two liberties, and the pledge of all others. Those religious discussions in the seventeenth century which we think wearisome, that literary development which seems only to have puffed up the vanity of the nation, did not fail to set France on the way towards liberty. Port-Royal advanced her farther on this road than the Fronde ; and Louis XIV., in pensioning Racine and Despréaux, pensioned liberty, whose germ exists in concealment, and silently develops itself in all the elevated applications of the human mind. All these debates, all these labours, by forming a public, prepared a people ; for the public is the precursor of the people.

But in order to convoke this public on account of abstract and even subtle questions, two things were necessary. It was necessary, on the one hand, to raise them into questions of morals ; for morals, especially in modern society, are always popular ; and you will observe, gentlemen, that now as always, the people, obeying the noblest of instincts, reduce all questions of politics into questions of morals. But to this height did the author of the *Provincials* elevate the debate. Another thing still was wanted. I shall make you understand what it was by repeating to you a passage of Pascal, in his *Thoughts* : “ It is necessary that we should not be able to say (of a writer) that he is either a mathematician, or a preacher, or eloquent, but that he is an *honest man*.” It was precisely in this that most of the writers of the time, even on subjects of common interest, had hitherto been deficient. Not that they did not pride themselves on

being honest men ; but “the true *honest man* (says Laroche-foucauld) is he who prides himself on nothing,” no, not even on being an honest man. Pascal knew that it was necessary to be this, and he did not pride himself on it. He knew, in his writings, to be an *honest man* ; that is to say, according to the language of the time, a man rather than a writer, a man although a writer, a man of reality, a man of life, I would gladly say a man of the world, taking the expression in the best sense that it can bear. It was then, in the domain of literature, a grand novelty, a real discovery. And it is not only once that Pascal exemplified it. If he was an honest man in the *Provincials*, he was also in the *Thoughts* ; for this apology for Christianity was the first, among modern apologies, that was written by an *honest man*. For the rest, you will understand that the honest man, in the sense of the seventeenth century, is not the contrary of the honest man in the sense of the present. In Pascal, at least, the two meanings harmonise admirably. These *Provincials*, so pleasant and so lively, so admirable in the estimation of the world, were, in Pascal’s intention, a work as serious, and perhaps as necessary, as the *Thoughts*. He wrote them in the midst of the most acute sufferings, and, so to speak, with one foot on the threshold of the eternal world. Is there nought to be found in them of the spirit of the world, nought of the bitterness of the old man ? I dare neither affirm it, nor deny it. But when still nearer the tomb, Pascal, being adjured in some sort, to do himself justice with respect to this writing, answered : “ If my letters are condemned at Rome, what I condemn in them is condemned in heaven. *To Thy tribunal I appeal, oh Lord Jesus !* I am asked if I repent of having written the *Provincials*. I

answer that, far from repenting of it, if I had to do it now, I should make them still stronger."

But for the moment we have to do with another kind of *honesty*. What we refer to consists only in rejecting technical language, the formulæ of the schools, esoterism, the emphasis or the delicacies of wit, and, in a word, speaking like everybody and for everybody. And, in fact, the *Provincials*, being addressed to everybody, reached their destination. Their success was immense and popular from the first, as Pascal himself testifies. "Your two letters (he represents the *Provincial* as writing to him) were not for me alone. Everybody sees them, everybody understands them, everybody believes them. They are not only esteemed by theologians, they are agreeable even to people of the world, and intelligible even to women." The public did them the honour which it does to the works whose names it has often in its mouth. It abridged their title. They were not the *Letters to the Provincial*, but the *Provincials*, a title which Pascal himself adopted. There are only two name-givers in the world, the people and the law. I say not which of them has more authority.

I do not know whether it ought not to be added that Pascal, without knowing it, flattered some popular instincts, apparently because he had them in himself. When you hear him exclaim: "In truth the world is becoming distrustful, and only believes things when it sees them;" when the saying escapes him, "If there were constant observations to prove that it is the earth that turns around the sun, all men together (*the Pope included*) would not keep it from turning, and would not keep themselves from turning along it,"—the observer of the Puy-de-dome, who was supposed to

be far away, reappears before you. And doubt not these words, and others like them, when spread abroad, made more than one heart throb with a strange pleasure. Pascal, as a theologian, made his reservations no doubt, and preserved for the head of the Church a sphere of infallibility ; but he made other reservations in favour of the senses, in favour of common sense perhaps, in favour of facts, in favour of science. He is not on that account the less a Catholic ; but he has interposed, in the name of the intellectual liberty which was threatened, an appeal on the ground of excess of jurisdiction. This shall be reckoned to his credit; it shall be remembered; and all that class of men who believe only what they see, shall regard themselves as proceeding from this writer, who in his *Thoughts* has sometimes the air of not allowing men to believe even what they do see. M. Villemain is right : the spirit of inquiry is one of the things of which Pascal, in the book of the *Provincials*, has made himself the representative.

We have no occasion to say more in order to make it be understood what charming surprise was excited in the public by the appearance of the *little letters*. The interest of some of them has diminished ; that of several others is lasting, or is always ready to be renewed. “Your maxims (says Pascal to his adversaries) have something amusing in them, which always rejoices the world.” In our days, Pascal would perhaps find that the odious carries it over the ridiculous ; for, excepting that he has made a choice, and that he has managed his adversaries, what we know of modern casuistry excites less of laughter than of horror. But there was ample material for both in the curious library, whose rays are so obligingly dispensed by the good father whom

Pascal brings on the stage from the fifth letter. I am not capable, gentlemen, of sitting in judgment on the judgment of Pascal, though I have no hesitation in repelling with indignation the well-known saying of M. de Maistre : "From the *Liar* of Corneille to the *Liars* of Pascal." Pascal here occupies the position of an accuser, and not of a judge. The *Provincials* are not a sentence, but an indictment. If he is just, it is as an adversary, an enemy may be just ; as one may be just towards those whom he wishes, justly perhaps, but still wishes, to destroy. Even in this sense, is he always just ? Is he just in referring everything to premeditation, to calculation, and never anything to error ? Even a Jesuit may be deceived. And when, in his thirteenth letter, Pascal represents the Jesuits as throwing forth upon the world the halves of maxims, innocent when halved, but intended to be united in due time and place, to form by their union a monstrous error, do you not think that he infers a little too strictly the intention from the act ? I have asked myself these questions ; but, after all, it must be admitted that the most skilful could not do at the same time two things so different as are polemics and history. Pascal, "the minister of a great vengeance," to use his own language, holds a sword and not a balance ; and, whether on this account, or because he is a Catholic, a whole class of considerations must have remained strange to him. He is not led to observe that the Jesuits are only the foster-fathers, not the real fathers, of the system which bears their name ; that what has, justly or unjustly, been called *Jesuitism*, dates from the beginning of the world ; that the art of interpretations, the direction of intention, and mental reservations, have been practised in all times by the most ignorant of men ; and that,

if the name *Jesuit* had the meaning which the Jansenists had given it of their own accord, and which it has since borne in general usage, it would require to be said that the human heart is naturally Jesuit. What is *probability*, but an extraordinary name of the most ordinary thing in the world,—the worship of opinion, the preference given to authority over individual conviction, to persons over ideas, to the chance of occurrences over the oracles of conscience? The spirit of the age, public opinion, the progress of ideas, what is it all but still probability under modern and popular names? Probability was without a name until Satan assailed our first parents. But was Satan, in their eyes, aught else than a *grave doctor*,—very capable, after all, of *rendering his opinion probable*? All this is no excuse for Escobar, Molina, or Father Bauny, if they did, in fact, from the infinitely varied suggestions of the wicked one, compose a whole system of morals; only, the honour or the shame of the invention does not belong to them in any way.

For another reason, Pascal could not have said that a church which is led by its principle to value numbers above all else, and to address itself immediately to the masses, must give up two things at once, viz., the formation of a living unity, and the maintenance of the highest principles in theology and in morals. What Montesquieu said of aristocratic government, that its spirit is moderation, may be said, in a certain sense, of the massive church to which Pascal and his adversaries alike belonged. Sublime verities may have been professed, sublime virtues may have been practised, by men belonging to her; but the sublime in anything is not her doing; and there is no angle a little sharp which she has not more or less blunted. But every idea, with the

help of circumstances, must one day reach its complete expression, and be personified either in a body or an individual; and then it has the appearance of rising above itself, whereas it simply stands erect on the platform where it was. Thus it happened with the Romish idea in the sixteenth century. The companions of Ignatius produced indefinitely all the lines that had been begun. In theology, in morals, they spoke the last word of their church; or rather, they revealed to the church her own thoughts; or rather still, they revealed to her the inevitable consequences of her principles. The church was excited; the most illustrious doctors issued protests, disavowals. Catholicism would be neither Jesuit nor ultramontane. Still it is both the one and the other in germ; and I know not how, without denying or destroying itself, it can ever get rid of these inconvenient and dangerous excrescences.

An observation suggests itself on reading in Pascal the extracts on the morality of the casuists. How the human mind is stunted under the influence of sophistry, and, above all, religious sophistry! There are no smaller minds than those that approach great subjects with small thoughts. Instead of growing large, they grow smaller; and, in this respect, we may say that no science is so well fitted as the science of religion to elevate and enlarge thought, yet no region of science presents to us, among the minds that frequent it, so striking and complete examples of frivolity and puerility. So it is, and so it must be. Truth, when we diminish it, avenges itself by diminishing us.

The quotations that we have made\* have given you the

\* In a previous lecture, not extant.

means of appreciating what a continuous perusal will, doubtless, make you admire still more ; the ingenious skillfulness of the composition. The general progress of the work was not, and could not be, premeditated ; and if we admire in it truly dramatic changes, a perfect rhythm, the honour of it belongs to the situation and the incidents at least as much as to the author. But in each of the distinct parts of which the work is composed, to what a pitch is the art of transitions and of gradation carried ! Art truly perfect ; for it is not perceived on a first reading, but reflection soon discovers it, and it is a new enjoyment. I speak especially of the letters in which Pascal represents himself as indoctrinated by the good Jesuit father ; but the merit which I remark, and which I recommend to your study, is more or less remarkable in them all.

The two series of letters which unitedly compose the collection of the *Provincials* differ greatly from each other, though both are equally perfect. We have alternately, it has been often said, Molière and Demosthenes. There is no exaggeration in this compliment. The comic of Molière, in his most excellent works, is not better than that of the first *Provincials* ; and when they appeared, Molière did not exist. As M. Villemain says, "We should admire the *Provincial Letters* less, if they had not been written before Molière." Molière, in fact, may have owed something to Pascal, and it is difficult to doubt that he did. Pascal learned nothing from Molière. Corneille, in his comedies, the best of which preceded the pamphlets of Pascal by fourteen years, had had the merit of bringing on the stage the conversation of respectable people. He had been very pleasant in the *Liar* ; but the *Liars*, to use the language

of M. de Maistre, owe nothing to the *Liar*. If Pascal did not invent the comic, which is older in France than Corneille himself, he gave the first example of it to the seventeenth century. All the letters included between the fourth and the eleventh *Provincials* are, I will not say perfect comedies, but treasures and models of the most excellent comic. What is to be admired in Pascal, is his preference, in the execution of his design, of comedy to satire. A satire of such length would have been monotonous ; we weary of mockery almost as quickly as of praise. But the comic, which is nought but the simple disclosure of a character by itself, when it is good, is not wearisome. Such is the virtue of the drama, and the charm, I will say, of simplicity, for the comic is always simple. A comic character is one who does not wish to be so, who betrays himself unconsciously, and who would willingly say with Alceste, on seeing the laugh burst out around him, and on account of him—"Upon my word, gentlemen, I did not suppose myself to be so pleasant as I am." The comic is the simplicity of sin.

The most consummate hypocrite may have simplicities which render him comic ; and thus it is that Tartufe, I mean the character of Tartufe, is found proper for comedy. It is in the same sense that those of the *little letters* which have led to the comparison of their author to the author of Tartufe, are essentially comic. The malicious good-nature and the feigned docility of the disguised Jansenist are, doubtless, very amusing ; but what is comic is the character and the part of the casuist. I tried, in my last lecture, to analyse this character : I did better ; I allowed it to delineate itself before your eyes in some of Pascal's pages : I shall not return to it now. I shall only add, that the pleasure

afforded by satire, however excellent, is in general of an inferior nature to that yielded by comedy. There is in the latter something more than amusement, something even above the legitimate but dangerous satisfaction which the sight of a necessary and deserved punishment may afford. The pleasure of comedy, or, to restrict myself to the exact truth, the pleasure which the comic properly so called yields, is a poetical and intellectual, I will even say, if you permit me, a philosophical pleasure. But we should not forget that Pascal is not only pleasant by the ridicule of others, but that he is very pleasant on his own account, and that, for the fineness and good taste of his raillery, he is an accomplished model who had had no model. There is no gaiety more fresh and more cordial than that of this melancholy man ; and this is perhaps a proof that the gift of tears and that of laughter have a secret relationship. But there is no raillery more elegant than that of this solitary. The *honest man* appears throughout, in that age which was peculiarly that of honest people. Never, or almost never, does he play on a word ; his pleasantry, like that of Madame de Sévigné, turns always upon things. Not, says Boileau, but that

“ A muse, though e'er so fine,  
May give to play on words a passing line.”

And Pascal has allowed himself this liberty at least once, but sheltering himself behind an academician, which is perhaps, after all, but a piece of supererogatory maliciousness. “ As an academician (he makes this personage say), I would authoritatively condemn, banish, proscribe, I might almost say I would exterminate with all my *power*, this neighbouring *power*, which makes so much noise about nothing. The

evil is, that our academic power is a very distant and limited power." A play upon words more decided, and of more questionable taste, occurs at the end of the first letter, but only in the old editions : "I leave you at liberty to hold by the word *neighbour* or not ; for I love my neighbour too much to persecute him under this pretext." As I find this badinage still in an edition of the *Provincials* published in 1667 (five years after Pascal's death), the expression stands to his account, and presses with all its weight on his conscience as a writer. It is not, I think, a very heavy burden. Be that as it may, the expression has disappeared. As the friends who suppressed it had not, apparently, better taste than Pascal, it may be supposed that scruples of a more serious nature demanded this suppression.

But what fault can the most delicate taste find in such passages as the following? The first forms part of the postscript of that thundering philippic which is called the fourteenth Provincial. How ready gaiety is always to spring up afresh in a serene soul!

" . . . You ought not to make him disavow anything so public as the blow of Compiègne. It is evident, my fathers, from the declaration of the injured man, that he received on his cheek a stroke from the hand of a Jesuit ; and all that your friends have been able to do, is to make it doubtful whether it was given with the palm or the back of the hand, and to agitate the question whether a stroke with the back hand on the cheek ought to be called a blow or not. I know not whose province it is to decide that ; but I should still think that it was at least a *probable* blow. This saves my conscience."

The following appears to me still better :—

“Ho ! ho ! says the father, you do not laugh any more. I confess to you, said I, that the suspicion that I wished to amuse myself with sacred things would be very painful to me, as it would be very unjust. I did not say it in earnest, answered the father ; but let us speak more seriously. I am quite disposed to that, if you wish it, my father ; *that depends on you.*”

It may appear singular to say so, but I say it notwithstanding : Of the two comparisons which have been made of Pascal, the one with Molière, the other with Demosthenes, the one which honours him most is the former. In the second of these parallels it is Demosthenes that is honoured. To lessen the danger of this assertion, it must be explained. Individually, and in respect of talent, the author of the *Provincials* is, perhaps, not superior to the author of the *Philippics*. But if the one is not more eloquent than the other, *things*, if we may so speak, are more eloquent with Pascal than with Demosthenes. We must start from this principle : what is eloquent in eloquent works is truth. Eloquence is only truth impassioned, that is to say, truth in its fulness, for passion completes truth. I speak, you will understand, of truths of the moral class ; but who thinks of asking eloquence from truths of any other class ? Whence would Demosthenes himself have derived his eloquence, if not from moral truths ? What are his most famous oratorical displays, but energetic appeals to truths of this class ? It may then be expected that an eloquence which shall have all these at its disposal, and in their most perfect purity as in their greatest elevation,—an eloquence of which these great ideas shall be not only the point of support, but even the object and the material, shall be, all other things being equal,

the loftiest of eloquencies. We can, without effort, share in the emotions of Demosthenes ; but our whole heart springs forward to meet the emotions of Pascal in the letter on the love of God, and in that on homicide. Christian eloquence, by which I do not mean to particularise that of the pulpit, but the eloquence of Christian ideas, has doubtless in itself some substantiality and unction, fitted to fill the whole soul ; while every other eloquence, though it bear the name of Demosthenes, will never do more than half fill. We could dispense with the eloquence of talent, if we had always the eloquence of things. But we are bound to it. It does not exempt us, it rather imposes upon us a law, to be eloquent ourselves. For what is eloquent in a sensible and effective manner is not the truth without us, but the truth within us ; consequently, as I just expressed myself, truth impassioned.

Others have called it, gentlemen, impassioned logic. It is without doubt that this adjective and this definition are superior in truthfulness to that incomplete formula, "To be eloquent is to know how to prove." But logic is only a part, the formal and instrumental part, of truth. All truth is logical, so far as it is truth ; but there is a logic concealed at the bottom of truth, even when it is only asserted or stated ; and there is another logie, ostensible, avowed, actual, so to speak, the employment of which counts for much in the eloquence of *discourse* ; for to discourse and to reason are synonymous terms. This logic, it appears to me, has attained perfection in the *Provincials*.

The logic of discourse, in the *Provincials*, is remarkable for the close fitting of the links, which are separated by no interval, and which form so continuous a whole, that they may be said to be incorporated into one another. In the

fragments of discussion, properly so called, or of deduction, every phrase, every word, travails for the proof, gravitates towards the result. The particles, no less than the masses, obey attraction and tend towards the centre. By the way, and without loss of time, each idea is marked out, each object is characterised ; but all seem to have heard, like humanity, the famous word of Bossuet : *March, March !* And all marches, in fact, in these ardent and stubborn deductions. All is on the march, and nothing is in haste. The eloquence of Bossuet consists often in omitting the intermediate ideas, and in bounding with one stroke of wing across all the space which the horizon encloses. The eloquence of Pascal might be said to consist in doing the opposite. So it might be said, gentlemen ; so much power has this slowness. In this progress, measured, but imperturbable, the argument always, so to speak, is advancing : the aspects of the idea are multiplied ; new consequences appear ; formidable alternatives, ruinous dilemmas, flash out unexpectedly ; error, pressed to extremities by the ruthless logician, gives up, drop by drop, all the poison with which it was inflated ; it is astonished, terrified at itself. Like the criminal put to the rack, besides the confession that is asked from it, pain forces from it others which were not asked. The reduction to the absurd or to the hateful, is doubtless found, whatever be the appearances, at the termination of all argumentation ; but it is flagrant, and often unexpected in the discussion of the *Provincials* ; and Pascal has understood, better than any one else, the oratorical advantage of superabundant proof, which is strengthened by its length, its delays, or, if you will, its adjournments ; as, in another sphere or on other occasions, it is strengthened by expeditious and summary justice.

It is not enough to study the logic of Pascal in the places where naturally it takes its ease, and reigns without a partner. With Pascal, logic mixes itself with everything ; and this, still more than what we have just said of his argumentation, forms the distinguishing feature of his fine genius. Shall I be able here to make myself intelligible ? Under features more or less veiled, logic or reasoning is everywhere in human speech. The nicest logic is the law, and constitutes the beauty, of the simplest narratives ; logic is at the beginning or at the bottom of the most impetuous emotions of oratory. And how should it be otherwise, since our innermost and most instinctive emotions are mixed with logic ? Is a witticism aught else, often, than a sally of logic ? The finest things of every class are the expression of, or are subject to, the law of a superior logic. For correctness and inexactness are not the only differences between one man's logic and another's. There is a learned or sublime logic, as there is a vulgar and superficial logic. It is often inspired or suggested by something which prevails over it ; and as there are solid reasonings, so there are touching reasonings. Logic is not anterior to all. Before it there are the facts, and the impressions which the facts produce ; although I would not say that logic has never aught to do with the impressions which appear the simplest. Sublime facts and impressions render logic sublime ; but it preserves its character, and gives to the discourse not only a form but a special energy. Logic has doubtless some part in the effect of these famous lines of Medea—

“ Can he betray me after so many kindnesses ?

    Dares he forsake me after so many crimes ? ”

May not this be thus translated ? Of two things he forgets

at the least one, my kindnesses or our crimes; for if he remembered the former, how *could* he forsake me; and if he remembered the latter, how would he dare to betray me?

The lines which I have just quoted make me almost hesitate to draw from a divine source another proof of my position. Hasten then to forget them, that I may venture to remind you that logic is present and manifest in some of the most impressive sayings of the Great Teacher. Is it not a sublime reasoning, but still a reasoning, that strikes us so forcibly in this passage? “And as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read what God says to you, I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

I wish now to say that, in the *Provincials*, Pascal impresses the character of logic on all the parts of his discourse, on all the details of his style. I beg you, gentlemen, to peruse the book with this single view. You will then understand me, and you will see, I venture to say, to what extent I am right. It were sufficient for me to recall to you those last pages, which we read a few days ago, of Pascal’s fourteenth letter. Even when passion seems to hurry on the course of his chariot, with what firmness, or rather with what vigilant strictness, does logic hold the reins, and with what attention does Pascal, even in respect of the form, observe its minutest requirements! In the calmest passages, devoted to pure discussion, you will not find him more scrupulous, more exact, than in the moments of his ardour. And yet you feel yourselves hurried on, and you see the wheels of the chariot smoke. Logic is impassioned; passion remains logical.

These observations may serve to set before you some of the characteristics of Pascal's style. We know what the rhetoricians of the time, at the head of whom it is right to place Balzac, had made of style, or what sort of style they had found. That style, which too often sounded hollow, had acquired, by their care, an elegance, a number, and a certain kind of elasticity which had previously been wanting to it. But that style is full-grown and manly only in the prose of Pascal. Logic and passion have been at the charge of this transformation. Still it must not be supposed that Pascal was entirely dependent on himself, and that he owed nothing to his predecessors. We cannot read him long without perceiving that he had learned something in their school ; and I do not know whether it should not be added, that he might have gained still more. Nothing certainly so important, so essential, as what he has added from his own resources to the common stock. But, in short, those who, in refuting his opinions, tried to refute his style, were sometimes right, though on points on which it was of scarcely any consequence to be right. Their remarks prove at least how nice the ear had become ; and Pascal might well have said, what is so true, "Let those only consult the ear who have no heart." It is not, however, the less true that it is good to consult it, and that he sometimes fails in this particular. Father Daniel was perhaps a little severe when he blamed, as inelegant, this expression at the beginning of the *Provincials*: "So many assemblies of a company *so* celebrated as is the Theological Faculty of Paris, and where there have passed *so* many things *so* extraordinary and *so* unexampled, make us form *so* lofty an idea of it, that we can only believe that this is a very extraordinary subject." But would he

have been too rigorous had he found the same fault with some other expressions?—the following, for example:—“It is time to restore their reputation to so many persons who have been calumniated; for what innocence can be so generally recognised that it shall not suffer some damage from the so bold impostures of a company spread over all the earth, and who, under religious habits, cover so irreligious souls, that they commit crimes, such as calumny, not against their maxims, but in accordance with their own maxims?”

Expressions such as this, truly unformed, not to say deformed, are not so rare in the *Provincials* as might be expected. This does not prevent Pascal's surpassing his predecessors even in the good qualities which are peculiar to them. He is more harmonious, more periodic, than any one of them, when he chooses to be so; and I would say that he cannot equal them without surpassing them, since the merit on which they prided themselves is completed by his. The ear is best consulted when the heart is consulted at the same time. Then number, harmony, have a meaning; and the pleasure which we derive from these being combined with emotions, is so much the more lively and the more touching. You know, gentlemen, that when Shakespeare is moved, he begins to speak in verse; and that Schiller, in similar moments, adds to his verses a more marked rhythm, and the ornament of rhyme. Pascal, in his way, does the same thing. He is only periodic and harmonious on occasion. It is when he is grave, impressed, vehement, that his style becomes musical. He is then as much so as the character of prose admits of:

“Before the incarnation, there was an obligation to love

God; but since God has so loved the world that He has given His only-begotten Son, the world, redeemed by Him, shall be discharged from the obligation of loving Him! St John's declaration, that he who loveth not abideth in death, is reversed! Thus those are rendered worthy of enjoying God in eternity who have never loved God in all their life! Behold the mystery of iniquity completed."

"Cruel and cowardly persecutors, must, then, the most retired cloisters be no asylum from your calumnies! While those holy virgins night and day adore Jesus Christ in the holy sacrament, you cease not night and day to proclaim that they do not believe that He is either in the Eucharist, or even at the right hand of His Father; and you drive them publicly from the Church, while they pray in secret for you and for the whole Church. You calumniate those who have neither ears to hear you, nor a mouth to answer you," etc.

I suppress the remainder of this passage, which we have already read entire.

You who are acquainted with Balzac, and who have read Flechier, these two heroes of the periodic style, have you discovered in the one or the other a period finer than the following?

"Oh, great venerators of the holy mystery, whose zeal is employed in persecuting those who honour it by so many holy communions, and in flattering those who dishonour it by so many sacrilegious communions! How worthy it is of these defenders of so pure and admirable a sacrifice to cause the table of Jesus Christ to be surrounded by hoary sinners budding with their infamy, and to place in the midst of them a priest whom his confessor even sends from his wan-

tonness to the altar, there to offer, in the place of Jesus Christ, that all-holy victim to the God of holiness, and to convey it from his polluted hands into their all-polluted mouths!"

This fine passage must have struck you in another respect; I mean, by the accumulation of antitheses. This figure, altogether intellectual, is that which Pascal employs by preference, if not even exclusively. And one of my hearers pointed out to me the other day, that Pascal's antitheses are redoubled and interlaced, opposing several words to several words, phrase to phrase, and often one series to the inverse series, with the most careful exactness. You have examples of this in the passage which I have just read to you; or rather the whole passage is composed in this way. On one side the *venerators* of a *holy* mystery, and on the other, those who honour it by *holy* communions; here, so *pure* and so *admirable* a sacrifice, there, hoary sinners all budding with their *infamy*; a victim *all-holy*, and a God of holiness; *polluted* hands, and mouths *all-polluted*.

You will see elsewhere (Letter XIV.) the world of the children of God, which forms a body of which Jesus Christ is the Head and the King; and the world at enmity with God, of which the devil is the head and the king;—Jesus Christ, called the King and the God of the world, because He has everywhere subjects and worshippers; and the devil, called also in Scripture the prince of the world and the god of this generation, because he has everywhere emissaries and slaves. You shall hear the language of the city of peace, which is called the mystical Jerusalem; and you have heard the language of the city of trouble, which the Scripture calls the spiritual Sodom.

Examples, if we sought them, would be found in abundance.

So much evil has been said of antithesis, that I need not say any more. Pascal condemned it more forcibly than any one else, when he compared “those who make antitheses by forcing words to those who make false windows for symmetry.” But Pascal does not force words ; and, indeed, it is not properly words that he opposes to words, but ideas to ideas. Antithesis is but a toy in the hands of the orator,<sup>1</sup> who says, lamenting the death of Turenne, “Is it that after so many actions worthy of *immortality*, he had no other *mortal* thing to do ?” But antithesis in Pascal’s hands is no toy, it is a weapon. And what a weapon, gentlemen, you have seen. It is a two-edged sword.

I have established the wholly intellectual character of antithesis. This leads me to speak more generally of the style of Pascal. All its beauties are intellectual or moral ; that is to say, they are of a severe kind. Pascal has always correctness and force, clearness and depth ; but the picturesque metaphor, the coloured image, of which the *Thoughts* present some beautiful examples, is almost a stranger to the style of the *Provincials*. No one would say indeed, with reference to this style,

“Stepmother Nature, in these frightful regions of cold,  
Produces nothing but soldiers,—iron instead of gold :”

But it is certain that this manly diction rather calls forth the idea of strongly-tempered and perfectly-polished steel, than of burnished gold. The purification of style, by the writers of the former half of the seventeenth century, had

<sup>1</sup> Flechier.

had, for its first object, the elimination of those lively and bold metaphors which pushed themselves, in clustered jets, into the writings of the sixteenth century. But not every one knew, like Pascal, to supply the place of brilliancy by strength. With him, strength, always measured and natural, is so great, that it scarcely allows us to regret the want of brilliancy ; but assuredly no one ever less abused, or even less used, figurative style. Pascal would not stoop to collect the happiest of metaphors ; and if he did make an effort, it would be to avoid the metaphor which presents itself to him, and to find the direct expression which escapes him. His style, if you will have it, is strewn with figures, but with those figures which are called oratorical, and which might be called dramatic, in which it is not the word, but the writer himself, that forms the image or picture.

My admiration of this incomparable style does not, perhaps, prevent my understanding and sharing the regrets of a modern critic, who is displeased with the author of the *Provincials* for not having sufficiently preserved "the freedom, the carelessness, the lively and rapid turn, and the simplicity of language of our fathers." Perhaps, in fact, in the reformation of the language, sufficient distinction was not made, perhaps all this *Gaulism* was too hastily rejected. The old was discarded for the antique. We have gained, no doubt ; but we have lost also. But these changes in style were the consequence of changes far more important. People not only wrote, but lived, in a different style. A certain boldness of transition, a certain familiarity in images, a highly coloured style, appeared to every one like the legacy of the old time. In several of these respects, Pascal and his age were admirably at one. Port-Royal also has its share

in this regulated gait and this sobriety. There is asceticism in all this; and the authority of St Augustine, so prevalent with these solitaries, was not sufficiently so to make them adopt his style. They have only taken his doctrines. Pascal, their secretary, speaking for them, forbade himself those liberties for which his posthumous fragments have proved that he had a natural taste. But, let us admit it, he took many other liberties. Did they appear to him to be more innocent?

The *Provincials* have got the credit of having fixed the language. If this honour does not belong entirely to Pascal, if Corneille and Balzac claim a share of it, that of Pascal is certainly the greatest. Pascal was the first who was at once pure and popular in prose. Balzac had been less popular, and Corneille, it must be said, less pure. The decisive moment in the history of the language is the moment of the *Provincials*. For the rest, there is sometimes a misapprehension of the meaning of the words, “the fixing of a language.” To fix a language is not to arrest its development, to limit its acquisitions. It is to reject entirely what it was hesitating about rejecting, and to sanction authoritatively all the rest. Many expressions which were still in use were condemned without remedy by the contempt with which Pascal treated them. Others, whose fate was uncertain, he has, as Madame de Sévigné would have said, “consecrated to immortality.” Very few words which he has employed have since then gone out of use. It would be difficult to find three or four instances; *pleige*, *marri*, *envieilli*. But, by the effect of that insensible derivation which draws words far from their first or etymological signification, the meaning of several terms which Pascal uses in the *Provincials* has much changed since his time. Against this effect of

time, genius can do something, but not everything. Pascal has stopped on this descent far more words than we can know. He has employed some words in such a way as to make it impossible that they should ever signify aught else than they signified under his pen. But he could not arrest them all at this point. The following passages will show you some of those words on whose destiny time has prevailed over Pascal :

“When *discourses* are opposed to *discourses*, those which are true and convincing confound and dissipate those which have only vanity and falsehood.” Instead of *discourses* (discours), we should now say *reasonings* (raisons).

“I should have renounced Jesus Christ and His Church, if I did not *detest* their conduct, and that publicly.” *Detest* (detestais), that is, bear testimony against, *disarow* (desavouais).

“He offered me several of them, which did not *agree* with me;”—which had no relation to my position.

“Your superiors are rendered responsible for the errors of all the *particulars*,” that is, of all the *individuals*, members of the Society.

“It only remains to me, in order to be catholic, to approve of the *excesses* of your morality.” The *excesses* (les excès) for the *laxity*, the *deviations* (les écarts, les égarements).

“Who would not believe that these had been in fact *imposed* upon Father Bauny?” “What falsehood to *impose* these terms on general councils!” To ascribe falsely, gratuitously.

“Some way which I admire without knowing it, and

I pray you to *declare* it to me ;”—to indicate, show, point out.

“ Do not interrupt me, for the *sequence* even of it is *considerable*.” *Sequence* (suite) for order or connection ; *considerable* for important, or worthy of attention.

Without much search, you might find others. These I have collected without seeking for them.

The *Provincials* are become again a work of importance. This is a fortunate circumstance. They will be re-read, and this model will resume, not its former honours, which have never been abolished, but its literary influence, the part which of right belongs to it in the education of talent. Masterpiece of discussion and of style, it will reclaim its share in our attention and in our study from the works which seem to have usurped all our admiration, and which, though perhaps not less brilliant, are much less perfect. The special glory of the writings of the great age is justness in the beauty, and measure in the strength. It is by this admirable tempering that they have become classical. We may enjoy as much, and more, the reading of other writings; none will be so profitable to the mind and the taste as these; and I know not, after all, if our enjoyment will be less, though it will be of a different kind. Take them for all in all, nothing has taken the place of the *Provincials*. Between antiquity and the present time, this book remains unique, with none like it. However high above Pascal we may choose to exalt the Socratism of Plato, the mockery of Lucian, the irony of Voltaire, the sarcasm of Junius, the causticity of Paul-Louis Courier, all this, be it better or less than Pascal, is not Pascal ; and polemics is entirely in his hand. Pascal is polemics itself. Rousseau and Lamennais,

and several others, whom the polemics of the day have rendered really illustrious, ask me if I forget them. Not at all. But without detracting from them, it is not to them, but to Pascal, and for reasons merely literary, that I should first send young minds who wish to learn at once the difficult art of discussing, and the not less difficult art of writing. If I had succeeded in attracting any such into this path, I should not regret, either on their account or my own, the length of this study.

## VIII.

JACQUELINE PASCAL.

OBEDIENCE is a blank in the modern programme of human life and social progress ; and we can scarcely explain how the word has been retained, unless by supposing that it has found in the world some improper and erroneous application. People do not always have their own will, or all their will ; they often do the will of others. In this respect nothing is changed, and there is still obedience in the world, if to yield is to obey. But where is the principle even of obedience ? Who is there that makes obedience a duty ? We might say, in a sense, that the present generation has lost it. It has been said also, that this loss has been so much the less in favour of liberty, as liberty, true and worthy liberty, is always proportioned to obedience ; their principle, in the bottom of the soul, being one and the same principle, and the two currents springing, so to speak, from one and the same source. This consideration gives us a measure of the moral decline of our age. Obedience is retiring with hasty steps, drawing with her liberty, her sister. They are not yet, thanks be to God, out of sight ; but he must hasten who would make up with them. Their majestic figures are already half-down beyond the horizon.

There is no obedience where there is no religion. That is a truth ascertained by experience and common sense.

Religion is an obedience, and the only principle of obedience ; and all that can remain of this latter in a world or in a heart whence religion is withdrawn, is but the impression still subsisting of the old empire of God over the conscience ; a remainder, still perceptible, of a first impulse which is exhausted.

Amid the too general neglect of this rule, and the decline of this power, it is pleasing to discover in the past, and still more blessed to meet in the present, illustrious or obscure examples of this virtue of obedience. Above all, we are pleased with those examples which show obedience at its source, or in the first, the loftiest, and the most righteous of its applications. This satisfaction is but little disturbed by some aberrations more or less grave, which still leave the principle intact. One is refreshed by the sight of those beings who are absorbed by one only thought, that of serving God, and who are more jealous of all that pertains to Him than is the most complete miser of his wealth, or the most suspicious despot of his power. This contemplation carries back the soul, at least for a moment, to all its loftiness, and affords it a transient perhaps, but a lively consciousness, of its unchangeable destination, and its most essential relation. Such is the impression which we receive from every example of serious piety, of piety, we would say, penetrated by obedience. Such is, in particular, the great boon that we owe to those accomplished masters of the spiritual life, the men and the women of Port-Royal. But, perhaps, upon none of them is this character more strongly impressed than upon the humble nun whose memory has been revived, almost at the same time, and as by concert, by M. Cousin and M. Faugère. With the others, command was mingled with obedience ; and

although the exercise of command was on their part still obedience, yet pure submission in them does not so forcibly strike any one who does not look at them very closely. Whereas, in Jacqueline Pascal, all is manifestly submission; all is converted into obedience; her great talents, the little of liberty that still remains to her, the energy of her will, all being devoted only to will what God has willed, to such an extent that it is in the share of authority that devolved upon her that this feature of her character and her life, obedience, is most prominent and most prevalent.

This volume (for, with some differences which we shall point out, it is one book published by two editors)—this volume was necessary to make us fully acquainted with the great Christian school to which the author of the *Provincials* belonged, and of which Port-Royal is but the highest expression and the fullest development. The doctrinal books which it produced, and the great features of its history, do not tell us all. Details, accidents, disclose better the inner thought, the spirit, the life. That this school betook itself to seriousness, no one ever thought of doubting. But to what extent it did this, and to what extremities people were consistent in this lofty region of Catholicism, we cannot fully learn but by listening at the gates; and that is what we do, when we read, whether in M. Faugère's or in M. Cousin's volume, the life and correspondence of Jacqueline Pascal.

In truth, not Jacqueline alone, but all the members of this great family, stand by turns before us. Perhaps there is, in certain families, a bright moment—a moment never to return, when the type of the race, slowly elaborated, attains the degree of energy and perfection to which it was destined,

stamps its clear and deep impress on two or three coins, and then is broken for ever. Such appears to have been the case with Blaise and Jacqueline Pascal, two precious vessels which were broken by the boiling in them of truth and genius and feeling. The covering was found too weak, as perhaps any other would have been, to resist the internal effort. Blaise died at thirty-nine years of age, Jacqueline three years younger. This short term was sufficient for them to give to the world great examples which shall never perish.

We feel an admiration more complete and more respectful for her than for him. We doubt whether we have anywhere met a character of man, or even of woman, more complete than that of Jacqueline. Had we to do with one of those peaceful and naturally submissive souls, for whom regulation is a rest, we should speak otherwise; but such as was the sister of Pascal, she became by means of a combat, a victory, and that one of the most difficult, as also one of the most complete, that ever were. It may be asked if, in order to obey so exactly when one is thus constituted, it be not necessary to turn towards obedience the passion which was directed otherwise. But every passion is indocile. If it do obey, it will obey at all events to excess. But it is not thus that the sister of Pascal obeyed. She knew not that cunning manner of "finding her own pleasure," as says the prophet, in disobeying by the strength of her obedience. She obeyed peacefully, holily, exactly (yet strenuously); that is to say that she obeyed; and we cannot tell with what grace (we must be allowed to use the word) she displays, on certain occasions, an authority of language which proves without dispute that, according to nature, she was born, more than any one, for command, and would have

exercised it with incomparable vigour, if she had not, according to grace, been born for obedience.

And she is quite a woman. Nothing allows us to forget this, and she never forgets it herself. No one of her sex had ever a manlier character. Madame Roland would have taught her nothing. Her thought is not less manly than her character; and yet we are never tempted to say that she comes out of her sex. No: she never does so. All this strength is pervaded by feminine grace and tenderness. We were reminded, while reading her Life and Letters, of that fine line which a modern addresses to the prince of poets,—

“ Still thou wert man, we feel it by thy tears.”

We feel also, by her tears perhaps, or by something still more touching even than tears, that the sister of Pascal, his mother also we might say, was profoundly a woman. She is more so than any one of the *strong women* whom the history of the Church or of the world recommends to our just respect. Her life is that of a strong woman, her death that of a woman. She dies of grief for having—on the faith of her brother, of the great Arnaud, of all that was illustrious at Port-Royal—taken part in a transaction which they all considered honest, but in which the exquisite delicacy of her moral sense had detected a slight equivocation. What strength and what weakness in such a death! But it is not the Christian, it is the woman that succumbs, pressed down under the weight of her own courage. This grief, this death, this whole soul so tender and so mighty, what a subject for the poet who knew so well to compel us with the *tears of Racine* to mingle our own, and for whom, of a long time, Port-Royal and its inner life have no secrets!

In order to estimate the extent and the value of the sacrifices which Jacqueline had made in renouncing the world and herself, we must, after the *Training for Children*, read the letter to the Mother Angelica of St John, upon the signing of the formulary. “We ask (with M. Cousin) of all who still retain some feeling of energy of character, and of the beauty of disinterested convictions,—we ask of them if they know many pages grander and more energetic.” But what we desire especially to notice is the authority, let us venture to say the boldness of language, which Jacqueline never allowed herself on her own personal account, and of which she would never have been believed to be capable, if the perils to which truth was exposed had not compelled her to throw off her inviolable reserve. By favour of this unexpected opening nature escapes, character for a moment claims its rights, and the loftiness of heart of the Pascals appears entire in these words:—“I know well that it is not for girls to defend the truth, though it might be said, by a sad mischance, that since the bishops have the courage of girls, the girls ought to have the courage of bishops.” Such a life, long buried in the shade under the influence of idleness, of sickness, or of piety, is awakened, like that of the great Condé, by a battle of Senef. But there must be the opportunity. Without it there can be no awakening, no revelation. And all great souls have not had, at the commencement of their career, a Rocroy to put their greatness for ever beyond the risk of doubt. What is the Rocroy of Jacqueline Pascal? An internal victory of which God was the sole witness, and which owes the better part of its greatness to the obscurity in which it is enveloped. To obliterate herself, and then to obliterate even the least traces

of the *obliteration*, had been, for some years, the task of this heroic girl. She had believed it to be her duty, in particular, to mortify her fine intellect. But she had not been able to separate herself from it ; and she neither did nor wrote anything which does not bear intellectually the stamp of superiority. Still nothing is comparable, in this respect, to the letter on the formulary. Precision, sagacity, vigour of dialectics, energy of language, all that constitutes eloquence is there, and stands out boldly on an admirable ground of humility.

From this agitated scene, where she scarcely shows herself, and shows herself only for a moment, we gladly follow Pascal's sister into the habitual sphere of her thoughts and her labours. This world is still more extraordinary than that in which we have just admired her. This world, apart from the world, is not only the monastery : it is a group of individuals and of families ; it is a distinct portion of French society of the period ; it is that portion of the Catholic church, to which, subsequently, the name of a man, or of a book, was given, but which certainly does not proceed either from the book or the man. It is, if you will, a spiritual and ascetic school which Catholicism has disavowed, and which obstinately refuses to disavow Catholicism. The life of Jacqueline Pascal, the memoirs of her sister and of her niece, procure for us an entrance, and give us at least as much acquaintance with it as the pious writings of the Nicoles, the St Cyrans, the Quesnels, the Duguets. We learn not only how they thought, but how they lived in this little church, born of the Spirit. Can it be true that man cannot give account of himself, and take knowledge of himself, without exaggerating himself, and

that this exaggeration is the weakness of the strong? Many facts, individually and collectively, seem to conspire to make us believe so. One of these is the asceticism of the religious school to which the sisters of Pascal, and Pascal himself, belonged. No other has ever more loftily professed, or better put in practice, the voluntary and deliberate devotion of the creature to the Creator. No other ever had more grief for, or abhorrence of, sin. There seems to have been a contest, in these strong and pious souls, between love of God and hatred of themselves; and although we cannot say that the latter prevails in them over the former, we may believe that the second, the hatred of self, is the special key-note of the piety of the Jansenists. It might be supposed that in their estimation God is not sufficiently avenged; and the Christian, without hope of completing this vengeance—(mark this point)—continues it, and follows after it. Though life were naturally a punishment, all must be done to aggravate it. If it be not, it must become such. The apostolic maxim, “Use the world as not using\* it,” is not sufficient for this school. It takes for its motto “Use not.” Too spiritual not to know that it is vain to withdraw from the world if we do not first withdraw from ourselves, it does not admit the one without the other; and the life of the faithful becomes, in every sense, a long farewell to life. St Paul, while rendering just homage to Christian celibacy, had declared that “marriage is always honourable.” Pascal pronounces it “the most perillous and the lowest of the conditions of Christianity;” and on this ground alone, he dissuades from it one of his nieces. His brother-in-law, M. Perier, habitually wears a girdle armed

\* Abusing?—TRANS.

inside with iron spikes, of which, through humility, he makes a secret. Secretly, also, he puts a plank into his bed, which, for this reason, he always makes himself. Mental enjoyments are, in the eyes of some of these Christians, another species of sensuality or luxury, and they sedulously retrench this superfluity, which remains permitted only to those who have no taste for it. To say all in one word, they have no bond connecting them with this world and its inhabitants but that of love. This cable alone holds them to the shore; all others have been cut. In their estimation, a man is still of the world as long as, with substantial, humble, and practical piety, he still lives the common life. To renounce it is the true, the only conversion. One sole object, one sole thought, one sole work;—such is the rule, such the spirit of the piety of Port-Royal. And if you would gain at once a lively and a freezing view of this life, you have only to read, in *Jacqueline Pascal*, the picture of the education of the little girls entrusted to her care, the description of one of their days. You will feel yourself seized at once with veneration and with shuddering.

M. Cousin has some very just observations on this subject, from which we would make no abatement. We would rather confine ourselves to adding, that what is not perfect as a model may be admirable as a symbol. It seems to us that we ought to congratulate ourselves, that, with all their imperfections and all their excesses, such examples have been given us. For our part, we are less struck, in all this, with the evil than with the good, with the false than with the true. Whatever may be said, the good and the true prevail. If man must deceive himself, it is better that he deceive himself thus; and if there is offence, it is less given

than taken. This life forcibly represents, even though metaphor be too much mixed with the direct sense, the true relation of man, the true feelings which are produced by repentance, the true greatness and the true beauty of human life. I should not speak in this way if I perceived, in the asceticism of Port-Royal, two errors of which, I confess, asceticism is alternately the cause and the effect:—I mean the mercenary spirit, and the lamentable prejudice which places the principle of sin in matter, or in the flesh. There is nothing of this sort here. Jansenism is perhaps on the border, but not on the slope, of this abyss. Everything in this piety appears to me spiritual, substantial, serious. The sublime fantastical is not in use. The virtues which it practises are those of utility and good sense. It rests, in its human relations, on justice and charity; and its morality is not an exact and ingenious mechanism, but a flexible and living organism. In a word, these extraordinary characters are nought else, in daily practice, than devout lovers of God and of their neighbour.

Since I have spoken of the penances of M. Perier, I should like to make him known to you in some other aspect. The following trait of character will compensate, I doubt not, for the girdle and the wooden bed. I leave his daughter, Marguerite Perier, to speak:

“Two days before his death, he did a deed which deserves to be recorded. There was at Clermont a treasurer of France, whose family was indebted to M. Perier to a large amount. My father, seeing that this debt was on the point of prescription, wished to take some step to prevent its lapse. He went to see this treasurer, to beg that he would not take it amiss if he made some demonstration. This man acted in

an unworthy manner, and made in the world bitter and very injurious complaints against him. These were reported to my father, who said that a man must be excused who is unfortunate in his circumstances. About eight days after, there came news from Paris that the treasurers were to be obliged to pay a tax of 10,000 livres ; failing which, they should lose their situations. My father told this to my mother, and added, ‘Here is a man ruined ; I should like to offer him some money.’ My mother said to him, ‘Do what you will ; but you see how much this family is indebted to you.’ He said no more ; but next day he went in search of this treasurer, and asked him whether he had heard the news, and what he had determined upon. ‘I must,’ replied the treasurer, ‘give up my situation ; for you see well that I shall not find 10,000 francs.’ My father said to him, ‘No, sir, you shall not give it up. I have 10,000 francs, which I will lend you.’ This man was so surprised that he said, weeping : ‘You must, sir, be a good Christian, for I have spoken evil of you, and I know that you are not ignorant of it.’ My father told us nothing of all this, which took place on Monday the 21st of February ; and he died suddenly at seven o’clock in the morning of Wednesday the 23rd. The treasurer, having heard of his death, came to the house, crying, weeping, and saying, ‘I have lost my father ;’ and he told us all that had passed on the Monday.”

Every one will be struck with the simplicity, almost biblical, of this narration. What I wish to point out is the extreme reserve and moderation of the expression. It is the style of this piety. It has no outpouring but towards God. On every other subject it restrains itself ; and the habit being once formed, there is no more any need even

of restraint. The barrier is no longer threatened even by the nearest interests or the liveliest emotions. This sobriety, all pious and holy, in the expression of its natural feelings, is not only a discipline respectable in its principle; it is a judicious and salutary economy. We expend ourselves in expressing ourselves. Never without an “evident miracle,” which will never be performed, shall it be possible to say of the soul what the poet has said of a marvellous cup :

“ The more the cup was turned, the less it empty got.”

Every vessel is emptied by discharging it; and, up to a certain point, what is true of a vessel is true of the heart. The soul has its excesses, which weaken it as other excesses weaken the body; and reserved men, when this reserve is not the mask of barrenness, preserve their souls as temperate men preserve their bodies. This reserve, even, is ordinarily a guarantee and a principle of strength. What we say of individuals may be said equally of epochs and of literatures. In their case also, when the sap runs over, we know that the tree is weakened. Though all this should be denied, it would still remain certain that nothing is so impressive as a heart-word on the part of one who is sparing of such as a matter of duty. We are touched at once by what he says, and by what he does not say. When Marguerite Perier concludes her Memoirs of her family with these simple words :—“ Behold what was the life of all the members of my family! I remain alone. They have all died in an inextinguishable love for truth. . . . God forbid that I should ever think of departing from it;”—we are moved to the bottom of our hearts, and are thankful to her for having so little drained the vase.

When giving account, last year, of the theology of Pascal, the most human, in our opinion, of all the theologies, we protested against the *inhumanity* of one part of his morals, which is essentially that of Jacqueline and Port-Royal. We may be allowed, after this, to say that the natural affections remained deep in these noble hearts, which the love of God had exercised in all love. Ah! well! there is something that crushes the heart in that article of training in which Jacqueline forbids to the poor little girls, brought up together, the least mutual caresses and even simple contact ; and we allow those who admit that such strictness is sublime in its principle, to condemn it as excessive. But this training itself, with what eyes can it be read without seeing that it is full of the most heart-felt tenderness, and the attentions of the most delicate love ? Who could read, I say not without respect, I say without tenderness, the *relation* of Jacqueline on the difficulties which her entrance into religion met with on the part of her family, and especially of her brother ? The letter on the formulary is not, in its way, more admirable than this, and the one gives value to the other. We cannot, and we will not, tell the whole : but let us quote one word. The subject is “the reasons of chicane” which the relatives of Jacqueline opposed to the design which she had formed of offering to the community of Port-Royal the compensation to which they were entitled, by right or usage, in return for her maintenance. “I know well (says she) that strictly these reasons were true, but we had not been accustomed to use them together.” Never was complaint more reserved, more tender, nor more sad. But you should read this long letter, whose very length, induced by holy respect and by gratitude, completes the picture of Port-

Royal, and is in other respects, in some passages, full of a serious gracefulness. The Christianity which we study is there in all its beauty, and in all the sweetness of its healthful perfume.

We are attempting, with a painful feeling of our insufficiency, to supply what M. Cousin, as we think, ought to have added to the moral observations, of which we do not dispute the justness. When he seeks, for the nineteenth century, a path between "the sublime but extravagant devotion of the seventeenth, and the free but impious philosophy of the eighteenth," he does not, perhaps, wish to keep us at equal distance from the two; but it appears so. This devotion of the seventeenth century is not only sublime, it is fundamentally true; and but for this it would not be sublime. Although error holds too much place in it, and even on points which M. Cousin could not indicate, the true, we repeat, prevails much over the false. Among the *awakenings* of which the history of Christianity has preserved the record, assuredly this is one of the finest. We have yielded to the necessity of expressing, as we felt it, a truth to which M. Cousin has not accorded the homage or the support of his admirable language. But we might have dispensed with it. M. Faugère had anticipated us. We find, at the end of his *Introduction*, the following passage, as excellent in style as in thought :

"This zeal, it is true, was not always as enlightened as it was faithful and fervent. On more than one occasion they exaggerated the maxims and the practices of religion beyond reasonable bounds, and forgot that the destiny of man here below is to unite the life of action with the life of contemplation; that the conduct of a truly Christian soul does not

consist in sacrificing the one to the other, but in regulating the one by the other, and in uniting them in that fair proportion, the inquiry after which is that after perfection itself. But all the passions, those even whose source is the purest, have their inevitable excesses ; and it is better to respect the exaggerations of virtue than to undertake the easy task of calling attention to them, and to enjoy the pleasure of triumphing over them. Ordinarily it is not to the side of heaven that the hearts of men are most inclined, and it is not there that morality is most in danger. And then is it not in the order of Providence that there are always extraordinary souls devoted to the worship of the true, the beautiful, the holy, the absolute ideal ? Yes ; it is well that it should be so, in order that humanity may never forget the titles of its dignity and its moral greatness, and, according to the expression of a sceptical philosopher (Bayle), in order to prevent the usurpation of the spirit of the world to the exclusion of the spirit of the Gospel."

The two works whose titles stand at the head of this article are very similar, and yet very different. They relate to the same subject, and are composed of the same materials. The memoirs by Madame Perier of her sister Jacqueline ; the poetry of Jacqueline ; her training for the young girls educated at Port-Royal ; her reflections on the mystery of the death of Jesus Christ ; her interrogatory ; her letters, are found textually and complete in both works. The differences are as follow. M. Cousin does not appear as a simple editor. His book, formed, in great part, of the writings of Jacqueline Pascal, is not the less a book on this remarkable woman, a book in which the quotations come as facts, or as points of support, framed in some of the finest and most

touching pages that we owe to the eloquent pen of M. Cousin. The publication of M. Faugère is, as its title indicates, a complete collection of the writings of the three ladies of the family of Pascal,—his two sisters, Gilberte and Jacqueline, and his niece Marguerite Perier. What belongs to M. Faugère, in this beautiful volume, the natural and indispensable complement of his edition of the *Thoughts*, is an introduction very worthy of perusal, a great number of notes, and, above all, the restoration of the text. This restoration, whose importance, as might be supposed, is not only bibliographical, is not the only advantage that distinguishes this edition. It is fuller and richer than that of M. Cousin, who, in fact, intended only to make a book upon Jacqueline Pascal, and who has made it with a superiority which will surprise no one. M. Faugère's volume contains, over and above that of M. Cousin, several considerable fragments, we might say entire works, of which M. Cousin has detached some pages, but the entire reproduction of which could not enter into the plan of his book. To say that the *Life of Pascal*, by Madame Perier (52 pages), and the *Memoirs of Marguerite Perier* on her family, and especially her brother (about 50 pages), are the chief, though not the only pieces which M. Faugère has included in his larger plan, is sufficiently to mark one of the distinctive merits of this publication. It ought, for the sake of exactness, to be stated, that that of the illustrious academician contains, exclusively, some other fragments, one or two of which were previously unpublished, but of little extent and inferior value.

The *Life of Pascal*, by Madame Perier, has been more than once printed before the *Thoughts*. This excellent

piece is, notwithstanding, unknown to a great number of the admirers of Pascal ; and its reprint, which entered naturally into the plan of M. Faugère, is a real service rendered to the public. With no less pleasure, we think, the public will welcome Marguerite's memoirs. Besides that she is of the family,—and this truly is evident,—these memoirs are instructive and curious. They are an additional light cast upon a society and upon manners of which we could not, by the help of some general data, form a sufficiently correct idea. There are always, in evil as in good, things which cannot be anticipated. Who would expect, for example, to see the pious and learned M. Pascal, the father of Blaise, lend his ear to a sorceress, and follow some of her counsels ? It is paternal love that induces him to hear advices, which, moreover, he has not sought. But the same interest, as keenly felt, would now-a-days drive but few people, and less than any one else a Christian, to the same course. It is a detail of manners that make us blush, less for Stephen Pascal than for humanity. We also have our superstitions and our manias. We also believe in occult powers. Shall I add, that we are not afraid of owing something to the prince of darkness ? Gross errors become subtle errors ; prejudices give place to systems, other prejudices. Evil is exhibited without being personified. On this subject many reflections might be made. We prefer only to add, that the living light which destroyed so much darkness is not extinguished, has not paled, and that from the eternal east there still rises for us, at the hour of a new morning, the eternal sun of humanity.

## IX.

## ABRIDGMENT OF THE LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.

WITH what interest, with what joy, have we not witnessed the restoration of the text of the *Thoughts*! An additional satisfaction of the same kind, and wholly unexpected, was in preparation for the admirers of Pascal. M. Faugère, to whom all that concerns this great man, and all that remains of him, seems as it were of itself to gravitate, has had the well-deserved good fortune to discover an unpublished piece from this immortal pen. It is a Life of Jesus Christ, composed, without any kind of pretension, with a child-like simplicity, and generally in the words of the Gospel. It is doubtless enough that this work, whatever it may be, come to us from the author of the *Thoughts*, that it may deserve to be published. But Pascal could not wholly conceal himself. Individuality jets out unexpectedly, and personal eloquence mingles itself involuntarily with that of facts and memories. Take an example of it.

“The same day, being warned to beware of Herod, He answers, ‘Tell that fox that my consummation draweth near.’ And this Lion of the tribe of Judah announced to that fox that He was going stedfastly up to Jerusalem. He then wept over Jerusalem, saying, ‘Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered thy children, and thou wouldst not!’ But notwithstanding her opposition, He did it when He would.”

We ought not to regard M. Faugère as an imitator of that freed-man of Pompey, collecting at random on the sea-shore the dried spoils of twenty shipwrecks, in order to form a funeral-pile for his dead general. He estimates at their intrinsic value, and according to their moral usefulness, all those fragments of which he still would not be at liberty to withhold the most insignificant from our pious curiosity. On this occasion he rejoices to have something to give us of Pascal, worthy of that great man, and of the monument which he had wished to erect.

“Pascal (says he) has been much celebrated as a mathematical genius and a calculator. Still he was specially a man of feeling. It is by the heart, even more than by the reason, that he is great, and remains for ever in possession of the sympathy and the admiration of men.

“It is easy to understand how his soul, so impassioned for moral beauty, must have been captivated by the Divine soul of the Saviour of men, and how he was seized with the desire to retrace, after so many others, the touching and marvellous biography of the Man-God. The *Abridgment of the Life of Jesus Christ* was very probably written, like what remains to us of the *Apology for Religion*, in Pascal’s last years. It is only another imperfect sketch ; but this sketch is that of genius, and the hand of a master is displayed even in those sketches sometimes scarcely formed, in those notes half written, which the author put down hastily, in order that he might find again the traces of thoughts which he purposed to develop. Some words in the *preface*, in which Pascal addresses *the reader*, seem to indicate that he intended to publish the *Life of Jesus Christ*. He doubtless considered such a work as the complement, or rather as the essential

introduction, of his *Apology for Religion*. But the earthly life of man is always too short for his designs and his hopes; for this work also time failed Pascal, and every page recalls to us the recollection of his existence so prematurely crushed under the weight of suffering and of genius,—a recollection which adds an unspeakable degree of melancholy to the picture that he drew of himself, when he defined man as a *thinking reed*."

M. Faugère has also found Pascal's will; and he has done well to publish it, even although there is perhaps nothing more remarkable in this production than that there is so little in it that is remarkable. Any upright and grateful man might have left, like Pascal, pious legacies to faithful servants; and no dying Catholic would have said less of his faith than the author of the *Thoughts* here says of his. Many readers, on hearing Pascal "implore the intercession of the glorious Virgin Mary, and all the male and female saints of paradise," will be scandalised, and will cry out about his inconsistency. But who, among them and us, is wholly consistent in religious matters? Probably no one. As regards Pascal, we have a strong confidence that, though here expressing a sincere persuasion on the subject of the Virgin and the saints, he rested his faith and his hope straight on the only and true foundation. If it be insisted on that there is here a contradiction in terms, a contradiction even in notions,—be it so. We shall not dispute the point. We are satisfied with our own conviction that there was no contradiction in his heart.

## X.

LITERARY CRITIQUE ON M. V. COUSIN'S ESSAY ON  
THE THOUGHTS OF PASCAL.

## I.

WE must begin by thanking M. Cousin. The difficult and fatiguing labour to which he has devoted himself prepares, and in great part completes, the restoration of a text whose purity concerns all the admirers of Pascal's genius, and all the friends of the national literature. He deserves thanks also for his jealousy for that beautiful French language which he knows and writes so well, and for the excellent literary maxims which the examination of Pascal's style has given him the opportunity to propound. Behold a career open to all those who, full of the same respect for the masterpieces of our literature, would wish to consecrate, in normal editions, a perfectly pure text of our classics, and to establish, as M. Cousin has done for Pascal, the share in the formation of the language that belongs to each of our great writers. For, equally removed from rashness and superstition, every classical writer enriches, perfects the idiom, or, if you prefer it, turns it to new account, derives from it some advantage previously unknown. The impulse given by M. Cousin will not stop; the other classics will have their turn. Meantime we have a good book the more, and modern literature is enriched with some of its finest pages by

means of a work of pure criticism, with which, although it had been extremely dry, we should have had no right to find fault for its dryness. In the hands of the accomplished adept, the brass has become gold ; or, to speak more exactly, where so many others would have perceived only brass, he has been able to find gold. Talent does not consist in covering a subject with strange spoils, but in stripping it of all that really concealed it from the knowledge of the world.

There is no occasion now to inform our readers of what this volume is composed. The author has only added an eloquent preface to the report which he made last year to the French Academy, on the autograph manuscript of the *Thoughts*. No one needs seek in that report an act of accusation against the first editors of these immortal pages. Severity with respect to them would have been inconsiderate ; and every one will consider the moderation of M. Cousin, in all these respects, judicious. Besides that their intention was evidently honest and disinterested, which debars us from applying even to the most important alterations the disgraceful epithet of *unfaithfulness*, it ought to be stated that the duties of an editor were not understood then as they are now. The external form of an author was so little accounted sacred, that there was no scruple in modifying, in order to bring them into accord with the public, writers with whom the form was almost all, was the very foundation. With each successive editor, Joinville lost some portions of what was then disdainfully called *the old Gaulish*. Marot, in editing Villon, made him, as nearly as possible, a contemporary of the chevalier-king. For a long time there was a contempt of the old French ; and, in general, so much the

less importance was ascribed to the form of a book, as its matter was more substantial or important. We have many reasons, fortunate and unfortunate, to look more closely into the matter ; but we may be assured that the cotemporaries of Louis XIV. would have taken but little offence, and felt little surprise, at the sight of most of those alterations, sacrilegious in our estimation, which the work of Pascal has undergone. There are some of them, however, which they could not have approved. For us, the public of the nineteenth century, all, or nearly all, are enormities ; and I acknowledge that, except the very few which M. Cousin himself thinks may be pardoned, not one ought to have been permitted.

Be it as it may, after reading the new book, I look sadly on my two copies of the *Thoughts*, saying to myself, I possess Pascal no more. I can no more, truly, either read or open him. I wait till M. Cousin, or some other friend of French literature, have given us the new text ; till then this famous book is in our libraries without being in them, and it will disappear from them when the new edition shall have appeared. Still let us not exaggerate. We had not the *Thoughts* of Pascal, but we had his *thought*. It will be better defined in the edition which we are led to hope for ; the outlines will be bolder and more lively, but that is all. M. Cousin may have written, on the occasion of his discovery, very fine pages on the Pyrrhonism of the *Thoughts*, and against Pyrrhonism in general ; and he may have said to this old enemy of philosophy,

“It is my happy lot to meet thee here ;”

But, to speak the truth, all that he has said on this subject he might have said long ago. If we were to believe him,

there was only perceptible in the old editions *some shadow* of the Pyrrhonism of Pascal, and this Pyrrhonism appears openly for the first time in those fragments which have just been published. (Preface, p. xviii.) Such is not our opinion. The Pascal of the Duke of Roannez, the Pascal of the Abbé Bossut, is neither more nor less Pyrrhonistic than the Pascal of the manuscript. Yet it might be supposed, from the earnestness with which M. Cousin argues it, that the Pyrrhonism of the author of the *Thoughts* was buried deep in the autograph manuscript, till these new diggings disinterred it. But be it as it may, we are not displeased to see so valiant a champion break a lance in honour of philosophy, now attacked by others than Pascal. The design is honest, and the passage of arms brilliant. Still, in the old tournaments they would not have ventured to proclaim the name of the conqueror, and to conduct him, with his visor raised, along the scaffolds, if he had not fought in accordance with all the rules. Has the modern knight of philosophy, or of free thought, observed them all? I do not know that he has.

In so far as he has touched with the point of his lance the buckler of Pyrrhonism, defying it as a felon knight (felon, however, only on one point,—I mean when, in the name of absolute doubt, it draws a conclusion in favour of absolute dogmatism), I can only applaud him. “I avoid a brazen-faced man who preaches modesty,” and I hate “like the gates of hell” the Pyrrhonism which dogmatises. The conclusion which it allows itself, be it what it may, is exorbitant, monstrous; for it is a conclusion. Its faith is, at the best, but a stroke of despair, an accident, a catastrophe. Between Pyrrhonism and faith, there is a whole infinite.

It is a strange rashness to commence by breaking all the steps of the ladder by which we propose to climb. It is a strange insolence to attempt to prove anything whatever, after having annihilated all the elements of proof. The modern Pyrrhonists, dogmatists at the bottom of their hearts, have invented and kept in reserve an element of certainty, one only,—viz., universal consent. But this element they could not obtain but by making use of all the others, and, consequently, by supposing them all. I have no need, after this, to inquire with what success they have established universal consent on any point. I do not inquire if their system, invented, they say, in the interest of Christianity, is not a lie given to that religion, which represents the truth as the secret of a few, and for all others foolishness. Lastly, I do not ask if the doctrine of universal consent is not the most murderous, though the most indirect, attack on the dignity of man, the holiness of God, and even upon morality. Enceladus, crushed under his smoking mountain, tells us more of it than I could tell. Pyrrhonism is self-condemned.

Was Pascal a Pyrrhonist after the manner of the new school? Was he a Pyrrhonist at all? He who said that “nature confounds the Pyrrhonists,” had he not found an asylum against the excess of doubt which unlimited Pyrrhonism would have refused him?

What is this universal consent, except *space and duration*? If it is not space and duration, if it is not fatality, bondage, imbecility, this theory has no weight except in virtue of reasoning such as the following: God cannot have deceived, or left to fall into error, the whole of mankind. Good or bad, this reasoning refers to a principle which is a

different thing from universal consent ; and from that moment the great hypothesis is abandoned. Universal consent, in its purity, is prejudice erected into a dogma, it is brute force put in place of law, it is *space and duration*. But the author of the *Thoughts*, even according to the autograph manuscript, does not wish that man should be exalted by *space and duration*, but by thought, in which, he adds, " all his dignity consists." I recall here that celebrated paragraph in which there are (so M. Cousin informs us) three successive lines in the manuscript. When I see Pascal, in this passage as in several others, wearying himself in seeking for his thought the most perfect and the most solemn form, this illustrious labour puts me in mind of two beautiful lines of the eighteenth century—

" In the womb of the rocks, through long ages unseen,  
Is brought to perfection the diamond's pure sheen ; "

And I feel at the same time that Pascal has provided means of defence against the accusation that is now brought against him. A *thought* which should be useless for the acquisition of truth (and that is the hypothesis of Pyrrhonism), could not constitute the dignity of man, and he could as well exalt himself by *space and duration*.

After this, it will be matter of surprise to hear M. Cousin declare that " the very foundation of Pascal's soul is a universal scepticism, against which he finds no asylum, but in a faith voluntarily blind ; " . . . . that " the difficulties which he encountered his reason did not surmount, but his will pushed aside ; and that his last, his true answer, is that he will not have annihilation." Are these assertions correct ?

The faith of Pascal would be, in fact, voluntarily blind, a caprice of his will rather than a determination of his reason, if he was, as M. Cousin supposes, the follower or the victim of a universal scepticism. "Give me (cried Archimedes) a point, a single point, of support, and I will move the world." But this solitary point would have been wanting to Pascal, and his faith would have been but an accident, an unforeseen event, a kind of brute fact; for, as M. de Saci well said to him, "That which overturns the foundations of all knowledge, necessarily overturns those of religion itself." He would have been a Christian without having any right to be one, and, strictly speaking, he would not have believed, for belief implies examination; and it must be left to the comic Andrieux to say, with his squeaking Voltaireian voice,

"Nought he examined; he was born to believe."

Was it thus that Pascal believed?

Let us care for nothing but the truth. Let us accept, with bandaged eyes, the results of a rigorous examination.

Take this extract, the quintessence (but textual) of a chapter of Pascal, entitled, *The Weakness of Man; uncertainty of natural knowledge*:

"Nothing, according to reason alone, is right in itself. What are our natural principles, but principles acquired by habit? Life is a dream, a little less inconsistent than other dreams. Instead of taking in the ideas of things, we tinge with the qualities of our composite being all the simple things that we contemplate. Man is only a subject full of errors. Nothing shows him the truth; all abuses him."

Take another extract, the quintessence of the chapter en-

tituled, *Astonishing Contradictions that are found in the Nature of Man* :

“ Man is formed to know truth. Speaking in good faith and sincerely, we cannot doubt of natural principles. We know that we are not dreaming. Principles are felt, propositions are concluded, and all with certainty, though in different ways. We cannot bring ourselves to doubt of everything ; and there never was real and perfect Pyrrhonism. We have an idea of truth which no Pyrrhonism can overcome,” etc.

If in the former paragraph the field is abandoned to Pyrrhonism, is not the field reconquered in the second fragment, which is the counterpart and the correction of the first ? Not the correction (it is said in reply), but rather the contradiction ; Pascal contradicts himself ; that is all. That all ! May it not be said that this is a small matter, and that I may cheerfully suppose this great mind capable of a forgetfulness which could be neither more nor less than inconsiderateness ! If there is contradiction, it is in terms, it is intentional. In the one passage *our natural principles are nought else than our accustomed principles* ; in the other, *we cannot, without bad faith, doubt of natural principles* : in the one, *our life is a dream* ; in the other, *we know that we are not dreaming* : in the one, *nothing shows us truth* ; in the other, *we are formed to know truth*.

The knot of this enigma is in this word of the same Pascal—a word which sums up all his thought. “ Nature confounds the Pyrrhonists, and reason (that is to say, reasoning) confounds the dogmatists.” It is one of the contrarieties or dualities of our actual nature. There are others of them. Man feels himself made for perfect happi-

ness, and never attains it; man sees himself on all sides governed by necessity, and he feels himself free. Pascal might have said, in like manner, that nature confounds the fatalists; that nature confounds, or rather relieves, the despairing;—nature, which is the first and the most sovereign necessity; nature, which is intuition, evidence, truth in us; nature, the immortal foundation which sin has covered with rubbish, but has not been able to crush; nature, that is to say, the best foundation of man, without which, to say truth, he would not be man. It is the opposition between the *discursive* and the *intuitive*, which some, I believe, have called the *impersonal*, reason.

For the thought of Pascal is not simply that man is of necessity a dogmatist, and that a blind necessity has reason against reason. He thinks that nature is the principle of reason, of truth, and of certainty. He thinks that logic, which is an abstraction, may upset all; he thinks further that, in our present condition, an unhappy tendency bears us towards scepticism, which disregards intuition, as towards fatalism, which disregards freedom; but with this difference, that the tendency towards fatalism draws on all men, while that towards scepticism draws on only thinkers. He acknowledges that, on certain subjects of the last importance, the feebleness of intuition, and especially of moral intuition, gives a favourable opportunity to the irruptions of logic, that fierce and implacable enemy which steals our best convictions, and sits unabashed at our fireside to count its booty. He considers that we hold only by a precarious title the most necessary and the best founded of our beliefs; that even their evidences do not insure them against the attacks of doubt; and that a great number of the things which we be-

lieve with the soul, we do not really believe. Conviction and doubt are not only two attitudes of the mind, but two states of the soul; and so long as the soul is not restored, there are many truths which we cannot solidly believe, or which we shall believe with an inert faith, incapable of resisting the assaults of logic. God has not made logic to rule over human life. What is noble in life is not to believe upon proof, but to believe without proof; or, if this language offend you, to believe on other proofs than those of reasoning. Suppose a being who should be wholly intellectual, you may be sure that on this very account he would be profoundly and incurably sceptical: and you may infer from this, that men with whom logic is the usual instrument, of whom logic is the profession (a geometrician, for example, as was Pascal), will be bad defenders, against abstract reason, of those truths whose force consists not in their being demonstrated, but in their being felt. If I do not feel that good is good, and evil is evil, who will ever prove it to me?

But does not Pascal's book contain a personal profession of Pyrrhonism? Pascal would never, even apart from Christianity, have confessed or believed himself to be a Pyrrhonist. When he denies that there ever was effective and perfect (that is to say, practical and absolute) Pyrrhonism, and when he adds, that nature comes to the aid of impotent reason, and preserves it from such extravagance, he sufficiently testifies, it appears to me, that Pyrrhonism is, in his estimation, extravagant. But there are two things that cannot be denied. The one is, that Pascal was more exposed than other men to the temptations of this devil; the other, that, indignant at the insolence of dogmatism, that is to say, of the reason which would know

everything and explain everything, he is delighted to grapple with it, and has a sort of passionate pleasure in being "the minister of so great a vengeance," which, to say the truth, falls on himself.

The true and good dogmatism (if we may be allowed for a moment to use the term in a favourable sense), doubtless appeared to him rare; and he regarded as rightfully acquired for Pyrrhonism, so that it must sooner or later accrue to it in full proprietorship, the whole territory occupied by prejudice and custom, and even all that where reigns, in real usurpation, the haughtiness of philosophy. There is no *faith* on one or other of these territories; and where faith is not, there is Pyrrhonism, at least potentially and in expectation. It will be understood that I do not speak here of the Christian faith, or of any positive belief, but of *faith* in general, anterior to all revelation. Prejudice in the world, and party-spirit in philosophy, may resemble faith. Faith possesses, touches, handles, tastes, is united to, its object. But neither authority nor the syllogism will give us, respecting truths of which the soul is the judge, a certainty that cannot be overthrown by the assaults of reasoning. Even the best reasoning produces evidence only with the assistance of the soul; and a thousand times we have seen *doubt* take up its position, hideous and sarcastic, at the close of a deduction whose adamantine links formed the most perfect chain. This massive tower which you had seen on the horizon, was but a cloud after all.

A lively and learned biographer of Pascal has said that this great mind, climbing on the shoulders of Montaigne in order more effectually to reach the enemies of religion, has given a striking proof of the support which faith may

receive from its natural enemies, unbelief and scepticism ; and he compares them to those devils which, in the architecture of the middle ages, support, so to speak, the bold spring of the dome of the temple towards that other dome, which is heaven. All well for devils in stone. But Pascal would not knowingly have called any of the myrmidons of falsehood to the aid of the truth. Even while admitting that Pyrrhonism had been serviceable to religion, he disavowed it. A Pyrrhonist, in his estimation, was an *extravagant* person. But how could he avoid showing us to what dangers we are hurried by logic, that half of the reason which we take for the whole reason,—logic, “that blind thing” (as a celebrated writer lately called it), or whose two eyes are obstructed when the soul and immediate intuition do not concur with it ? How could Pascal have refused to show the twofold impotence of man, with respect to the truth of which he has need, and to the happiness of which he is desirous ? How could he have shattered, after having carefully polished, the only mirror in which humanity can see the double furrow of one thunderbolt intersecting on his forehead ? The unbeliever is especially an unbeliever in himself. Man, in order to believe in himself, must first believe in God. Let God reveal Himself, that is, communicate Himself to us, scepticism and despair will be swallowed up in his bosom. The business is to find God, who is the peace and security of the understanding, not less than the peace and security of the heart. It is He who shall teach me at once to trust my reason and to distrust it. Pascal has ventured to say, “Man is but a subject full of errors, which cannot be effaced without grace.” Pyrrhonism is one of those errors.

Has Pascal overshot the mark? I should rather reproach him for having been deficient in caution; but I am not sure if I have a right to do so. What is Pascal's book? And, first of all, is it a book? It is impossible to believe that throughout we have the conclusive form of his thought; it is even difficult to ascertain decidedly the passages in which we have it. Supposing that we have it in fact, we might say that Pascal has paid somewhat too dearly for that freedom of gait and that *subjectivity* with which his book is so strongly impressed, and which constitute a part of its literary value. I am fully persuaded that, in many passages, Pascal is less a man who writes than a man who thinks aloud. It is not disdain assuredly, it is confidence; and in this disposition he says many things which must be understood *cum grano salis*. Could he fear that we should grudge him this grain of salt? He has then, by placing himself in the sceptical point of view, and more easily perhaps than any other, given free course to that abstract reason, that pitiless destroyer, that tried corrosive whose action leaves a perfect void behind it. He has attempted "to interrogate all principles with experience and reason;" but instead of saying, with M. Cousin, that Pascal forgets that he has affirmed everything, *by answering in advance all the attacks of scepticism*, might we not say with as much truthfulness that Pascal forgets that he has destroyed everything? But the truth is, that he has destroyed nothing, at least nothing irreparably, since he appeals from logic to nature, and strengthens (let us not forget that) nature by grace; for, as we shall see farther on, one of the triumphs of grace is to re-establish nature.

I see nothing that should hinder me (or rather nothing

which should justify me in doing otherwise) to regard as conclusive, such thoughts of Pascal as the following:—

“Principles are felt, propositions are concluded; and all with certainty, though in different ways. And it is as ridiculous that *the reason* should ask of the feeling, and of the intellect, proofs of those first principles in order to consent to them, as it would be ridiculous that the understanding should ask of the reason a feeling of all the propositions which it demonstrates. This impotence can, therefore, only serve to humble the reason which would wish to judge of all, but not to militate against our certainty, as if there were only the reason to instruct us. Would to God that, on the contrary, we never had occasion for it; and that we knew all things by instinct and by feeling. But nature has refused us this boon, and she has given us but very little knowledge of this sort; all other knowledge can be acquired only by reasoning.”

And elsewhere: “We must know to doubt when we ought, to be assured when we ought, to submit ourselves when we ought. If we run counter to the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous. For those who have not religion by feeling, we cannot procure it but by reasoning. God’s procedure is to put religion into the mind by reasons, and into the heart by His grace.”

We may, if we please, begin with these passages and end with the others; but it appears to me more suitable to begin with the others and end with these, upon which the whole book is founded, and without which its existence could not be explained. The book exists, such as it is, only because Pascal believed in the reason. I venture to say that that is evident; and if it should be pretended that

Pascal drives human reason into the burrow of scepticism so far that we can scarcely see what means of retreat he has left himself, I should still say, with the book in my hand, that he believed in the reason,—that he believed in it more, no doubt, in proportion as he believed in religion, but still that, in order to believe in religion, he leant upon reason, and that consequently his faith was not *voluntarily blind*, and that consequently it cannot be said that *he set aside by his will, rather than surmounted by his reason, the difficulties which he met*, and that, in fact, he has not taken a step in his *Apology* without having provided a safe asylum for the *first and undemonstrable truths* whose only proof is in their statement. The faith of Pascal is, in every sense, a sterling faith.

But is not Pascal decidedly and conclusively a Pyrrhonist with respect to those great truths whose union constitutes natural religion? We must dwell upon this point, for it is that about which M. Cousin appears to be most eager.

## II.

What gives most pain to M. Cousin in the scepticism of Pascal, is the way in which this great man expresses himself on the subject of the principal doctrines of natural religion; and inasmuch as these doctrines constitute, in the judgment of the learned critic, the necessary premises of revealed religion, it appears to him that Pascal is reduced to the impossibility of ever attaining to this latter, at least logically.

Was Pascal personally sceptical with respect to these two great truths? This should be a primary question. For M. Cousin it is resolved. He does not appear to believe that anything can add to or take from the evidence of

the declarations of Pascal on this subject in the famous piece *Infinity-nullity*, or the *Wager*, which M. Cousin has completely restored. In this piece Pascal avows that, "according to the lights of nature, we are incapable of knowing either what God is, or whether He is :" and in the same piece he declares "that he should not feel himself able to find in nature the means of convincing (of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul) hardened atheists."

I shall begin with a special observation, with which I might, perhaps, content myself. In the same page in which we read that it is impossible, according to the lights of nature, to know either what God is, or whether He is, we read, some lines above, "We may well know that there is a God, without knowing what He is;" and again, "I have already shown that we may well know the existence of a thing without knowing its nature." I admit that in strictness these two expressions may be reconciled with that which has scandalised so many people, and that they do not absolutely destroy it. But the respective places which all the three occupy, and the absence of all indication of the relation that may exist between them, establish at least this : that here we have not the conclusive form of Pascal's thought, nor even his conclusive thought. Let any one cast his eye over the whole of the piece, and tell us if he can see aught else in it than a minute ; and when I say a minute, perhaps I say too much. The preservation of this first outgiving of an immortal pen allows us, after two centuries, to surprise Pascal in the midst of the fermentation of his genius, to spy, if we may so say, the first bubblings of it, to see Pascal thinking ! Pascal, in fact, is here doing nothing but thinking, pen in hand. If it is impossible to

hold this piece as null and non-existent, if these first gropings do not cease to be a fact, and even a significant fact, it is not the less true that all this is an *aside*, that Pascal has said nothing to *us*, and that the path through which he passes should not be confounded with the place in which he remains. We see here only a mind searching and taking up its ground, exploring the difficulties of the field. And, moreover, is it he alone that speaks, or are there two? Are there not, perhaps, two men in one? We may make various conjectures.

But if, among these three expressions, or among all in the piece, we took the most sceptical, the most negative, and supposed it to be the avowed, the authentic doctrine of Pascal, it appears to me that we should be doing something akin to violating the secret of correspondence. The conclusive thought of the author must remain for us a sealed letter. We know rightfully and really only the preliminaries or the prelude of his thought. It has been said that private life ought to be walled in. Well! this belongs to private life. Between an expression which says that "we may well know that there is a God without knowing what He is,"—and another which says, a moment after, that "we can no more prove that God is than we can know what He is,"—the wisest, it appears to me, the only right course, is to remain undecided.

We think that we perceive something more finished, more conclusive, in the passage where Pascal acknowledges that "he should not feel himself able to find in nature the means of convincing hardened atheists;" and I am 'persuaded that he would not have shrunk from the responsibility of this statement. And, in substance, why should he

have shrunk from it? Who can reasonably be offended by this avowal? But at present I only ask, what reason there is to suppose that Pascal, on his own account, doubted the two truths of which he yet despaired of convincing hardened atheists.

Is it absolutely necessary, then, if we would avoid the imputation of scepticism, not only to believe in these truths, but to believe ourselves capable of demonstrating them to all the world, to consider the arguments which establish them irresistible in all cases and for every person, and to believe that *hardened atheists* shall be, in this matter, of as good composition as other men? But why not go further at once? Why not say that these truths are of an immediate evidence, which dispenses with the necessity of any proof? Why not rank them among the number of first and undemonstrable truths, which are proved by enunciating them? If it is the glory of a Descartes, of a Clarke, of a Fenelon, to have demonstrated them, it is because they required demonstration. If many great minds have devoted the best of their powers to prove them, it is because many other minds, and these not all of them the least, had doubted or denied them. How could they deny, or even doubt them, *before*, and even *after*, these demonstrations? Why have not the same arguments made the same impression upon all minds? Pascal knows, and will tell us. Why does not M. Cousin know it? Or, if he knows, why does he not tell us?

It is a thing which he might and ought to have told us. It is a strange thing that these truths are not instantaneously evident to all minds, that we did not possess them intuitively, that it is necessary to demonstrate them. This fact, though it be constant and universal, is not on that

account the less astonishing. Considered closely, it confounds us. Certainly it is not normal, or the being concerning whom we are compelled to assert it is not in a normal state. It is unheard of that what is universally, absolutely necessary, should not be evident; that truths without which human life has no foundation, no meaning, should require to be demonstrated. It is, perhaps, still more unheard of that what ought to be believed without proof should end in being believed in virtue of proof. The importance, the existence, of this problem can escape none but those fortunate minds whose whole progress in the region of thought has been but an easy triumph, and who have conquered without striking a blow. Many people, and among them many choice spirits, have not known this happiness. If Pascal underwent the agonies of doubt, I do not think him the less great on that account. At all events, there are certain subjects on which no one is well convinced but after having doubted. It is as with those structures whose position could only have been strengthened by an earthquake.

Even when giving their whole weight to the famous passages which we have quoted, we cannot say, with M. Cousin, that Pascal considered reason incapable of rising to the *idea* of the existence of God, and of the immortality of the soul. He has not even said that man, in his actual condition, cannot obtain a full certainty and a sufficient knowledge of these truths. But, granting that he has said so and thought so, is there aught in this of Pyrrhonism, or at least of relative Pyrrhonism? I know not; but what I see in the first instance is, that the human race, taken as a whole, is Pyrrhonist in this respect. What I think that I see further is, that, *dialectically*, pure and simple theism is not more easily

defended than pantheism, and that the idea (to speak only of the *idea*)—the idea of a God, living, personal, distinct from the universe which He penetrates and embraces, is not older than Christianity. It will be admitted, on a little reflection, how illusory and vain it is to know that God is, without knowing what He is. In this case, ideas of mode and of substance are confounded ; and Pascal himself, who has said that we may well know that God exists, and yet not know His nature, could not say so in an absolute sense. It is not the less true that the one of the questions is hollow and without interest, if we separate it from the other. According to what God is, He is or He is not God, He is or He is not. The question of His nature is identical with that of His existence; and the very name of God does not so much designate an abstract being as a congeries of attributes, a manner of being which it is sought to establish. It is this manner of being that has been especially proved by those who are reputed as having proved the existence of God. Science and humanity are really indebted only to those who, by raising above doubt the personality and the liberty of God, have thus proved Him to be God. But who did this previously to Christianity, and who has done it since, otherwise than under its inspiration ? It is true that this magnificent idea is become the patrimony of the world ; and that now it is boldly made a part, or the foundation, of natural religion. But we may on this subject appropriately borrow from an enemy of Christianity one of his happiest sallies. One day, in the presence of Voltaire, mention was made of the *Natural History* of Buffon. Not so *natural*, exclaimed he. I say the same of natural religion, and even, if you will, of natural morality. Christianity has given rise,

it is said, to some new feelings in our heart, and some new ideas in our reason. Say, rather, Christianity has given us a new heart and a new reason ; it has at least opened both the one and the other, and has brought out into the light plants whose frozen germ was waiting only a ray of this Sun of Righteousness. That of which humanity did not even suspect the existence, has appeared to it natural since it has known it. And it was natural, in fact ; for it harmonised with all facts, and completed all truths. The commandment, to adopt the language of the apostle of Patmos, has been found to be both old and new. Christianity, in all things, has led us back to nature. It is it that has restored to us the idea of God personal and living ; and philosophy, when once its road was pointed out by Christianity, has since had a fair field to reason on this necessary doctrine, and to take for spontaneous what was suggested ;—a mistake certainly more easily fallen into and more common than we suppose. If it will not, as a faithful vassal, acknowledge its allegiance in this matter, it must then explain to us why this notice of a God, one, personal, living, and free, is coeval with the Christian faith. Meantime, the men whom M. Cousin sets in opposition to Pascal—the Bossuets, Arnaulds, and Male-branches, the Sulpician Emery—are all, on this point, of one mind with Pascal ; and if this is Pyrrhonism, they were Pyrrhonists as well as he. The accusation must then be extended ; and it will not fail to be so, if we are not to be deceived by the silence of some and the concealments of others.

We cannot see how ideas which Christianity alone has brought forward, which it has furnished to humanity, could be presented as the necessary premises of Christianity, and

how it could not be arrived at but by the way of these ideas. *In fact*, many people have known nothing of these preliminaries, and have found natural religion only in the bosom of revealed religion. *In right* or *in principle*, it is very comprehensible that the matter may have occurred thus, and that the revelation of the God of nature and the God of grace may often have been but one and the same revelation. These truths were not Pascal's point of departure in his *Apology*. He carries the mind, and is carried himself, further back. It is in the *first and indemonstrable truths*, in the intuitions of the heart and of the understanding, that this second Archimedes has found a point of support for the evangelic demonstration. Let us admit, if you will, that if he had come later, or if he had had the privilege to know Descartes (not to speak of Malebranche, of Leibnitz, of Schelling, and of M. Cousin), he might not have thought himself bound to start so far back. But the only question at present is, whether he had premises; and we say that he had. He did not include in them all that M. Cousin, I suppose, would call the premises of Christianity; but what he had, was sufficient for him.

He had, it will be admitted, all that was necessary for the examination of the proofs of Christianity. He did not throw himself headlong into the faith as into a dark hole. His conversion was not the suicide of his reason. His apologetic was as rational, as good as that of M. Cousin could be. But if he not only has attained the goal (which is not the whole question), but if he has attained it in a good way, why reproach him for not having followed yours? Why reproach him with having sanctioned a religion of chance, when his own is evidently a religion of choice and reason?

Why ask him to account for his not having set out from the God of nature, if he has attained, by the way of logic and of proofs, to the God of grace, which involves and includes the God of nature ? Will you still insist upon the use that he appears to make of Pyrrhonism in the interest of the faith ? Will you not understand that he does not profess Pyrrhonism, but that he exhibits it ; that he points out the tempest of opinions, the trouble of intellects, the distress of the human mind, in order that he might make it be felt how necessary it was that God should cause to penetrate into this vast and deplorable darkness that ray of His glory which is at the same time a ray of His purity, and which our moved hearts call Jesus Christ ?

M. Cousin does not allow that there are any sceptics ; and I am reminded that all the world were such before the Gospel. But though I did not know this, I should assert it nevertheless. I should say it was so, for it must have been so. The world was sceptical, inasmuch as the Gospel is true. We may take this ground in a discussion with M. Cousin, since, in M. Cousin's judgment, Christianity is true. But if Christianity is true, it is also true that God has been manifested in the flesh, and that sinners, that is to say, all men, have been saved by this portentous abasement. Humanity knew not this before the event, and, not knowing this, it knew nothing. And as everything in our nature and in our destiny called for this solution, and as this solution, on the other hand, was impossible to foresee, it follows that, till the moment of the solution, all must have been enigmatical, contradictory, chaotic, in our nature and our destiny ; and that our reason, with bandaged eyes, must, like a prisoner in his cell, have gone dashing itself every moment

against some new problem. If it was not thus, it is apparently because we did not think. But if we thought, it must have been so, unless the work of redemption be but a badly joined and easily detached episode in the great human epic, unless sin or apostasy be a scarcely sensible inconvenience, and salvation be a mere matter of luxury. Although I knew, historically, absolutely nothing of the agitations of human thought before the Gospel, I should infer them even from the existence and the truth of the Gospel. I should say that, if the Gospel is true, the world, before its advent, must have been sceptical or Pyrrhonist, for the reason, at once threefold and one, of the absence of redemption, its felt necessity, and the impossibility of foreseeing it.

M. Cousin is distressed at the injustice done to philosophy, which is, he assures us, on so good an understanding with Christianity. Philosophy is not one. There are several philosophies; and, not to make a needless enumeration of them, we shall only distinguish between the philosophy which proceeds from Christianity and that which does not. For the first, it is not wonderful that it accords with Christianity, and it would be wonderful if Christianity had aught to say against it. As to the second, if it wishes to boast of this coincidence, it does more than is required of it; but, on the other hand, it would do less than it ought to do if it did not explicitly establish this coincidence. But as all philosophy is not able or willing to afford this proof, and as more than one, on the contrary, strenuously disavows this accordance, it is evident that by the term *philosophy* we must understand some particular philosophy, and certainly that of M. Cousin. Therefore let us only ask of him an account of this. It is his part to establish that *this* agrees with Chris-

tianity. We have a right to suppose that Eclecticism disposes the souls of men to embrace the foolishness of the Cross. We must then be told positively whether it is so, or whether this foolishness continues to be foolishness in the estimation of Eclecticism. In the former case, in favour of which there is a legal presumption, the event must have been brought to pass in the following manner. Philosophy (eclectic) must have proved to man that he knows nothing which can solve the enigma of his life, establish harmony in his being, and root peace in his soul. Who would not have a right to be astonished if any disciple of Eclecticism, and especially if the heads of the school, called even this conclusion Pyrrhonism ? For without this Pyrrhonism, a man does not become a Christian, and must laugh at Christians. And, on the other hand, if a man becomes a Christian, he must have a philosophy formed nearly after this model, unless it proceeds directly from, and belongs to, Christianity.

Be this as it may, there is no reason to be distressed at what Pascal may have said, or given to be understood, respecting philosophy. He has not condemned it in general. It may even be that, on considering the whole of its results, he wished well to it; for it has subdued the most presumptuous by depriving them of their hope; it has, in its struggles, thrown rich waifs upon the shores of Canaan; and a goodly number of the most eminent Christians have been the wrecked ones of philosophy.

We have not hitherto considered the truths of natural religion but as intellectual or metaphysical truths. But already Pascal has left us far behind him; and we must quicken our pace in order to make up with him, and to draw from him all his thought. You ask him to give

account of a dogma, or rather of a philosophical system. He is no longer there. He has something better to ask of Christianity, or rather of God. We imagine that we have all when we have the intellectual conviction of this truth, that God, or even that a personal God, exists. But it is little to know God, if we do not possess Him, and indeed we do not know Him unless we possess Him: for if, in some cases, the whole meaning of the word *knowledge* is intellectual, it is not so in all cases; and we might say in general, that intellectual knowledge (*le savoir*) is but the preliminary, the envelope or the logical impress of real knowledge. This is the key of the book of *Thoughts*; this is the point at which Pascal aimed: the knowledge of God by the heart. Before all, he had remarked, that, whatever be the intrinsic value of the intellectual evidence, it takes little hold even of the mind. "The metaphysical proofs of God (he tells us) are so removed from the reasonings of men, and so involved, that they strike little, and though this might be useful to some, it would be only during the instant that they see this demonstration; for an hour after, they are afraid that they are deceived." Is not this strikingly true with respect to most men? But had it not been so, still Pascal would not have been defeated. All speculative clearness, not only the most lively, but the most permanent, was as nothing to him in comparison with heart-knowledge; and if he had been pressed, he would not have shrunk from saying that knowledge is included in salvation, or proceeds from it; but what is more certain is, that he would only have regarded that knowledge as desirable which saves, that is to say, which unites to God. It is in this spirit that he says, "Though a man should be per-

suaded that the proportions of numbers are truths, immaterial, eternal, and dependent on a first truth in which they subsist, and which is called *God*, I should not consider that he had advanced far towards salvation." He did not despise the knowledge of God by the mind; but he regarded it as only the precursor or preliminary of a better work. "The method of God, who disposes all things with gentleness, is to put religion into the mind by reasons, and into the heart by His grace."—"Those who have not faith by the feeling of the heart, we can only procure it for them by reasoning, and wait till God Himself impress it on their hearts."

Even the knowledge by the mind, *as such*, has need of the heart. Without the desire to see, we do not see. When the life and the thought are greatly materialised, we do not believe in spiritual things. Many people have eyes, but see not; many people who have eyes to see, require to be turned towards the light. They must be taught the language in which we wish to convey instruction to them. All the reasonings which are drawn from spiritual notions are lost, or ridiculous, for men who are destitute of these premises. And therefore it is that Pascal could say, "I shall not here undertake to prove by natural reasons any things of this nature, *because I should not feel myself able to find in nature means of convincing hardened atheists.*" Pascal seems to have known what a hardened atheist is.

To know by the heart, that is the great matter. And hence we ought not to be astonished that Pascal not only dispenses with a great light, but does not desire it. This is the reason why, even in the internals of Christianity, he allows obscurities. If there were not such, the heart would leave all to the mind, which would be sufficient for all: and

the heart thenceforth, having no part in that research after the truth, which, even as a research, is a part of our well-being, would leave man to stalk sadly in the midst of those empty forms and abstract notions which he calls knowledge.

It is usual to believe that Pascal only put in opposition Pyrrhonism and revelation. But he makes another antithesis. He opposes feeling to Pyrrhonism. To reason, a despairing Penelope, he opposes the heart, and the web is no longer undone. He reclaims, restores the proofs of the heart. It is perhaps in this that the originality of the book of the *Thoughts* consists. The summary enunciation of this idea exposes me, I am aware, to more than one reproach, and more than one suspicion; and it is certain that the idea may be put out of its proper place, and may be exaggerated. No matter; it has its place in a sound philosophy. The heart is an instrument of knowledge as well as any of our senses; and on many subjects the reason can only act upon the data which it furnishes. Pascal has explained the matter admirably. He has made it clearly appear how righteous and how worthy of God it is that light should not be lavished but upon those who have their hearts right, and that from all others God should conceal Himself. And if the language which he had at his disposal had been more precise on these subjects, it would have fallen to the lot of the sublime author of the *Thoughts* to lay down, once for all, the province of this great faculty.

He had understood that the pure soul, or the purified soul, alone can receive certain truths, because sin is not only a stain, but darkness. This point of view explains many things in Pascal's book. It explains, in particular, the

fragment which has most shocked simple thinkers, the most *scandalous*, or at least the most *scandalising* passage. I shall say something of it in a concluding article, which is necessary at all events, as I have only spoken of Pascal's *work*; and my subject evidently requires me to speak of *Pascal* himself. After the book, the author.

### III.

The search after religious truth is an affair of the heart as well as of the mind. This conviction of Pascal gives, as we have said, the key to more than one passage of his book, and may remove more than one offence. No one of these offences is more grave than that which many persons have taken at a passage which the autograph manuscript has given us in all its nakedness: "There have been people cured of the malady of which you wish to be cured (unbelief). Follow the course by which they proceeded; it was by doing all as if they believed, taking holy water, causing masses to be said, etc. Naturally, the same course will make you believe, and will reduce you to the condition of a beast. But that is what I am afraid of. And why? What have you to lose?" When we met these extraordinary lines, we did as every one else does, we cried out in alarm. But a sufficiently simple reflection soon came to our aid. It is impossible to believe that Pascal seriously counsels his interlocutor to become a beast, and that without reserve he represents faith as the act of a beast (*une bêtise*). There is certainly here what in rhetoric is called *accommodation*. The "beastishness" of which he speaks is of a peculiar kind. It will be better understood when we know better Pascal's interlocutor. It is not any unbeliever, it is rather

a Christian. It is a man not only struck with the moral excellence of Christianity, but drawn towards that religion by a feeling which is as good as evidence, but still embarrassed by doubts of a wholly intellectual kind, which unsettle his conviction without being able to destroy it, and especially without being able to weaken in his soul the necessity of being a Christian. It is a neophyte, whose intellect, enraged at being set aside as peremptorily as unexpectedly, makes a stout opposition on the very threshold of the sanctuary, and, so to speak, on the steps of the altar. He is told that one element of conviction he wants, and that it is not competent to his reason, which evidently can go no farther and can understand no more. Enter, and you will see from within what cannot be seen from without; practise Christianity, and you will know it. But how, asks the inquirer after Christianity,—how will that lead me to Christianity? "To show you that it leads you to it," answers Pascal, "it is because it diminishes the passions, which are your great obstacles, etc." This is the strength of Pascal's idea—an idea which he would have developed, as is shown by the *etc.*, and which would then have appeared to be his principal, his true thesis. The rest is only the form. We may, I admit, conceive a better. Pascal might have said directly: Act as if you believed; mortify your flesh and its lusts; endeavour, cost what it may, to live in purity and innocence; humble yourself before your inferiors; submit yourself to everybody; practise loyally the Christian morality; quench the fire of your passions; hush the tempest of your worldly thoughts, and be sure that in this silence the voice of God will make itself heard. Ah! well! That was to say, in other words, what Jesus Christ

Himself had said : "He who shall be willing to do the will of My Father who is in heaven, shall know whether My doctrine be from God, or whether I speak of Myself." It is true that Jesus Christ would not have said : Take holy water, hear the mass, even although there had been masses and holy water then. He would not have said : Be baptized, go to the temple, accomplish the ritual law. Jesus Christ is here wiser than Pascal, God wiser than man. He does not counsel as a test aught but what is in itself good, obligatory, what would have been incumbent upon us even if Christianity had not been true. Pascal has not spoken so well ; but, in reality, what did he mean ? To direct the life in order to direct the mind. We can have no doubt of this when we read the concluding paragraph : "But what evil will befall you in consequence of your following this course ? You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, bénicent, a sincere friend, truthful, etc." This makes it evident that what was nearest to Pascal's heart, as a means of becoming a Christian, is less the ritual than the moral practice of Christianity. His idea is always this : Make trial of the life of Christianity, and you will soon be convinced of its truth. Be willing to be a Christian in action, and you will ere long be a Christian in conviction. Piety leads to truth, as truth leads to piety.

In the disposition in which Pascal's catechumen is, it will probably cost him little to embrace all the parts, all the details, of this practice. He is already a neophyte, so far as desire goes. He will carry into the fulfilment of the ceremonies an involuntary respect, an inclination so favourable, that he will take the holy water and hear the mass without hypocrisy and without imbecility. Was it right, then, to

give him this counsel? It was not; and we do not hesitate to affirm that Pascal here goes too far. We only mean to show that his error is but the abuse of a true, a philosophical idea. In fact, we must not too severely condemn vicious circles. The life even of wise men is full of them; and no one, I believe, would be astonished to see a Pyrrhonist on his knees, supplicating the Being of beings to prove to him His existence!

[As to that terrible word *abetira*, is there not apparent in it an allusion to the famous expression of the apostle, to the term *foolishness*, which Pascal boldly translates into *stupidity* (*sottise*)? And not without reason; for, in the eyes of many of the despisers of Christianity, *foolishness* is too noble, and *stupidity* expresses the idea better. The epithet *sublime* may be applied to *foolishness*, but never to *stupidity*. Some, therefore, will not concede to Christianity the honour of foolishness, and will insist upon stupidity. Pascal speaks according to their feelings, by using the term *abétir* to designate the humiliation required of the abstract reason, or, if you please, its momentary abdication in respect of questions which are not within its province, and with respect to which it would be, according to all appearance, but an importunate prattler and a guide without authority.]

Pascal, in his book, or in the rudiments of his book, it is true, demonstrates Christianity; but we might say sometimes that he is teaching the *art of becoming a Christian*; and that he only wishes, with the united means of knowledge and of reasoning, to lend a last aid, to give a last push, to men in whose hearts he has seen awakened, with the desire of being righteous, the desire of being Christians. The close correspondence—the identity, we might say—of these

two desires, if it is not a proof of Christianity, is at least a very strong indication in favour of its truth. But Pascal has not acknowledged *in fact* the sufficiency of this proof. It is sufficient, indeed, for the greater number of true Christians ; it is full and conclusive for them ; and whoever does not end by being a Christian in this way, has reason to believe that he has not faith. But no one is obliged to be contented with this proof ; and therefore, in general, we must proceed as if it were not sufficient. For some it must be completed, for others it must be superseded, by proofs of another kind. And in this Pascal engages, with singular energy, in what remains to us of his book. But he does not fail to recognise and to exhibit the intrinsic value of the moral or spiritual proof. Christianity is the natural food, the subsistence, of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. Pascal presents it to them, and says : See if you do not find here what you seek. Or, as if he withdrew a veil from before the adorable face of Jesus, he says to all men, See if this is not He whom you seek. Those who say, "Unless I put my finger into the print of the nails, and unless I put my hand into His side, I will not believe," he permits to touch these divine scars. Those who have from the first exclaimed, "My Lord and my God !" he does not tell to put their fingers into these sacred wounds, or to convince themselves when they are convinced already. He is not in pain about them ; they know as much of the matter as he does. He lets them alone. He has done all that is needful for them by opening the Gospel to them. We have read in a recent book that a young unbeliever, seized with a horror of evil, touched, or rather tortured, by the desire of holiness, after having taken this spiritual malady into the

world and into solitude, at last one day fell upon his knees, and in an ecstasy of impetuous fervour cried to God, Lord, make me righteous! He wished that a God should make him righteous; a priest came and made him Catholic. He proved to him the inadequacy of his reason, the necessity of a visible authority; and instead of the religion which he sought, he had that. He may have found a better afterwards. Pascal, who is not a priest, but a man, introduces his proselyte, hungering after righteousness, to Jesus Christ Himself; introduces them, if I may presume to say so, to one another, and leaves the catechumen in the hands and under the protection of his sublime Teacher. Jesus Christ speaks alone to the disciple, and the disciple hears alone. No man, no doctrine, is interposed between them. Soul believes in soul. Mind plunges into the fountain of truth. God and man understand each other without an interpreter, and are united without mediation. Jesus Christ becomes His own apologist; and what an apologist, what an advocate for Christianity, is the Founder and the Author of Christianity Himself!

The history which I suppose to have been that of many of Pascal's proselytes, was in part that of Pascal himself. It is a mistake to suppose that this great man sought in Christianity only a pillow to rest his weary head. His life, his writings, suggest to us a different judgment. Pascal, writing an apology, or, if you will, a demonstration of Christianity, has given so much space to a picture of the troubles of the intellect, that it might be supposed that he was only recounting his own history, and that it was the whole of his history. But his book, full as it is of himself, is one thing, and his life is another thing. I am not anxious to deny

that he groaned more painfully than others under the oppression of doubt; that uncertainty, as such, was more intolerable to him than to many minds; and that the desire of knowledge had nearly as much intensity in him as the desire of happiness in the generality of men. But Pascal was conscious of nobler desires. Others may know what is meant by the words *fault*, *wrong*, and even *crime*. He knew the meaning of the word *sin*. This opens the eyes, or rather this gives eyes. He had thenceforth, in order to assure himself of the truth of the Gospel, a *sense* which may be wanting to the most intelligent, the most gifted. He felt that truth and life, seeing and living, are but one and the same thing under two different names; that truth is not a form, but a substance; and that the only way of knowing the truth is by *being in* the truth. (1 John iii. 19.) And thus were taught him those things "which have never entered into the heart of man, and which God reveals to those who love Him."

If, then, Pascal has thrown himself into an abyss, it is the abyss of holiness. The *nullity* from which he has fled is sin. The darkness which horrified him was the "outer darkness," which is black only through the absence of God. He saw light where he saw love; and it is into love, properly, that he threw himself headlong. And let it not be said that if it is not enlightenment that he supremely seeks, it is happiness or salvation, and that this quest is worth less than the other. There is nothing in Pascal's book to support this assertion, if we take it only in the ordinary sense; and in the other sense, we willingly accept of it. The desire of happiness is no disgrace to any one, else it would be a disgrace to the whole world. It is perfectly equal in one indi-

vidual and another, for it is unlimited in all. If any circumstance appear to diminish its intensity in one, and to increase it in another, the level is immediately restored ; rather, it never has been disturbed, but it reappears to the attentive eye. The most generous man has a *feeling* of happiness not less lively or less sure than the most selfish man. Only, his happiness consists in self-sacrifice, in conformity to God, in living the life of the Spirit. The desire of salvation and the fear of hell are two different things. There is nothing noble in the latter of these feelings : all the nobleness of the human soul may be displayed in the former ; for the desire of salvation may often be translated into such words as these : "My soul thirsteth for the mighty and the living God. When shall I come and appear before my God ?" This is not *a* happiness merely, nor the greatest of happinesses ; it is happiness itself. Try to conceive a man who is a stranger to the fear of hell, who is convinced that he shall *enjoy* in another life all the blessings which he has most desired. Put him in possession of these blessings, and suppose at the same time that a deliverance so unexpected and benefits so vast have not opened his heart to love ; suppose him without God in this world and in the other, and climbing through eternity, heaping infinity on infinity without coming to God ;—I believe that the felicity of that man would be a horrid irony, his salvation would be damnation, and his heaven would be a hell.

It is towards God, and consequently towards spiritual felicities, that every man unconsciously gravitates. Very few people form a distinct conception of the pains of hell ; still fewer of the pleasures of heaven. The bare idea of the wrath of God, and of the peace of God, is sufficient. "Who

hath hardened himself against Him and hath prospered?" "Whom have we in heaven or on the earth besides Him?" Thus the voice of truth murmurs hoarsely in all souls. Take away the flames and the torture, alarm will remain. Take away the thrones and the crowns, hope will endure. The idea of being united to God is full of delight. "As for me, to draw near unto God, is all my good." The idea of being at enmity with God is horrible; "our God also is a consuming fire." I do not say that the fears and the hopes of many are not sordid and gross; I only say that, at the bottom of the terror and the desire of many others, there is more spirituality than might be supposed.

This will be believed with respect to Pascal more easily than of any one else; and we should count upon the support of M. Cousin on this point, if the Pyrrhonism of Pascal did not perhaps obscure his view, and did not alter perhaps his judgment. To what extent this takes place, it is difficult to form an idea. It is not enough for him that Pascal became a Christian in order to have done with it, and in some sort as a forlorn hope. He will not even have it that Pascal found rest in his faith. This may be logical, setting out from the author's first supposition; but that is not the question. The point is to ascertain if it is true. In any case, it will not be demanded that on this point we should be satisfied with a proof *a priori*. But, do the book and the life of Pascal warrant such expressions as these: "The unquiet and unhappy faith which he undertakes to communicate to men like himself"? This admits of no answer. We wait for proofs. We wait to know the passages, the doings, where Pascal's faith is shown to be unquiet and unhappy. We have not yet been able to discover them. They were passed

over in silence until M. Cousin spoke of them. But M. Cousin is not a man to leave us in suspense. He always goes well armed. He informs us, then, that there escape from the author of the *Thoughts*, in the midst of the paroxysms of *his convulsive devotion*, cries of wretchedness and despair. This *convulsive devotion* is apparently those returns to the past, those regrets, those agonies, those tremblings, perhaps those prayers, which we had taken for the usual characters of that sublime reaction of the new man against the old man. What though they be convulsions? As for those cries, readers, you are still more embarrassed, and you ask from what quarter of the *Thoughts* they are heard to issue? Oh what incredible deafness! or what an unpractised ear! What! have you not read in Pascal this astonishing expression: "The eternal silence of those infinite spaces frightens me;" and this other: "How many realms know nothing of us!" and yet this other: "How hollow and full of uncleanness is the heart of man!"? Is not this clear enough? Truly there is here but one thing clear: it is the dominion of prejudice over even the best minds. And why, then, should not Pascal, speaking as a man and not as a Christian, stating the impressions which are natural to all meditative minds that have not been settled by Christianity, have said that he could not bear the eternal silence of these infinite spaces? The God of Christians, the God of Pascal, animates with His voice, peoples with His presence, that infinite silence of which Pascal here speaks to us with so eloquent terror. It is admirable; it is just what he should have said. Why, in the same point of view, should not the author of the *Thoughts* have exclaimed: "How many realms know nothing of us?" Permit him to

humble at his pleasure that creature whom, ere long, he will magnify so exceedingly before you : for this miserable being, whom the worlds know not, God knows him, and God cares for him. Why, lastly, should not Pascal have called hollow and full of uncleanness, that human heart of which a prophet, who apparently had faith, said, with more energy even than Pascal, that it is deceitful and desperately wicked above all things ? By what right, when the question is as to a book, whose author, as all admit, places himself by turns in the most diverse points of view,—by what right lay hold of an isolated expression, of which the destination as well as the date is unknown, to pronounce that it shows the conclusive state of the soul of its author, and the last result of all his thought ? It was, we think, four lines that a famous politician asked, that he might hang whom he pleased. M. Cousin required but one to condemn the faith of Pascal.

“ His faith,” we are told again, “ is far from being unclouded;” for Pascal “ does not dissemble the difficulties which Christianity presents to criticism, if we engage in the study of texts ; and to righteousness, if we compare it with other religions.” Ordinarily, it is weak and ill-assured faith that *dissembles difficulties*. We have therefore here a presumption in favour of that of Pascal ; but for the rest, it must be admitted to M. Cousin,—let him make what he will of the avowal,—what he says of the faith of Pascal may be said of the faith of many stedfast Christians ; and perhaps there is not one in whom it has been without a cloud. If he will condemn it on that account, be it so. As to the reason of this fact, or the wisdom of this dispensation, we take the liberty to refer him to Pascal. As to the fact itself, it is so little peculiar to the author of the *Thoughts*, that almost the only

thing that distinguishes him is a courageous candour, of which the example has not become very contagious. Besides, it is not necessary to go to Port-Royal to hear statements like the following :—"The only religion contrary to nature, contrary to common sense, contrary to our pleasures, is that which has always been." Excepting the publication, all the Catholic doctors would sign it. They would not, I believe, adopt either this statement, which Port-Royal has suppressed : "Miracles serve not to convert, but to condemn ;"—nor this other, which M. Cousin *almost hesitates to publish* : "The prophecies quoted in the Gospel, do you think that they are referred to in order to make you believe? No ; it is to withdraw you from believing." Neither do we adopt these statements ; but we cannot allow them to outweigh so many other elaborated and developed passages in which the miracles and the prophecies are turned to a wholly different use. If a choice must be made, who can hesitate? And who will not see in these two short expressions, in these two lofty sallies, some of those first gleams, of which the hyperbolical and paradoxical form indicates nothing but the liveliness of a sudden impression, and the astonishment of an unexpected meeting? At bottom, there is truth in the thought of Pascal. Miracles have been rarely employed to convert, and have rarely converted. They have been, for those who have believed them, the reward and the encouragement, rather than the foundation, of their faith ; and their only visible effect has so often been to confound unbelief, or to deprive it of all excuse, that we might be tempted to believe that this was also their only end. The same observation is applicable to the prophecies ; and Pascal's error (on the supposition that we could justly

ask him to give account of the immediate bearing of those two expressions) would be, that he has been too absolute; that he has represented as the only end of prophecy and of miracle, what is probably but their secondary end, their foreseen and intended recoil. We shall not inform M. Cousin that the Gospel, often sufficiently paradoxical in its style, contains more than one expression analogous to the passages which he has brought to notice.

Pascal might have said many such things without our being entitled to affirm that he did not find peace in his faith. He found in it, we believe, peace and joy. We must not be led astray by the temperament of this extraordinary man, the effects of cruelly shattered health, and that something, which we may call geometrical impassionment, which we find pervading his life. Neither ought we to take this great man on the footing of an experienced, matured, tempered Christian, equally recovered from the old errors of his worldliness, and from the illusions of a new faith; but on the footing of a neophyte, younger in heart than in years, newer in faith than in life, and to whom the ardour peculiar to that period of the Christian life, combining with the natural vividness of his impressions and the boldness of his genius, suggests profound but alarming expressions, which we should never have known but for his premature death. I do not think that it is any irreverence to Pascal to suppose that, all Pascal though he were, he would have been subjected to a ripening process. What we should have seen him five or ten years later, is what no one can tell. But what we can say, at least to those who know that happiness has many forms, and that Christian joy is not a joy of temperament, is that Pascal was happy and

joyous in his faith. We do not know precisely in what sense M. Cousin could say that "Pascal's faith is another excess, almost as lamentable as the evil which it professes to cure ;"—(Pyrrhonism doubtless, not sin ?). At all events, Pascal knew nothing of it, and did not feel anything lamentable in his faith. We can now speak of the *Amulet*, of which so much has been said. That piece, which it has been attempted to render ridiculous, and which is sublime, casts the brightest light on the state of Pascal's soul during his last years. I cannot transcribe it, and I do not wish to abridge it. It is in everybody's hands. If we read it with attention, if we observe that it applies and extends to several successive epochs, and that Pascal carried it with him for a very long time, we shall be convinced that, if his faith was a lamentable evil, he did not suspect it to be so ; and we shall have difficulty in finding where to place, in the midst of this song of triumph and of praise, those cries of misery and despair which M. Cousin has heard.

There is something so extravagantly paradoxical in saying that such a man as M. Cousin has not understood Pascal, that we would very willingly not say it if we could do otherwise. But, in short, it must be said. There is something here more than a book, there is a man ; there is something more than philosophy, there is Christianity. There is, as has been said, a tragedy, which must not be witnessed in the character of a mere metaphysician. There are things which the most intelligent will not comprehend if he do not feel them. The author of the book which we are examining appears to have sailed in a deep but open sea, and never to have been rocked by the storm on waters whitened with breakers. There are facts which, all learned as he is he

does not know, and situations which, all penetrating as he is, he does not comprehend. To be comprehended, they must be experienced. It is with certain questions as with those fortresses which cannot be reduced by cannonading them from a distance—for example, from on board a frigate—but by landing, effecting breaches, assaulting, fighting hand to hand, crossing bayonets. There are problems, to the bottom of which the philosopher must descend, not as a philosopher but as a man, with all his reason doubtless, but also with all his conscience, all his sensibility, and even all his imagination. The philosophers and the economists have often fallen into the same fault, which shows that in the workshop of thought, an extreme division of labour has its inconveniences. The economist has said : I investigate how wealth is produced, and how it is distributed. Make room and let me pass ; let another occupy himself with the rest. But this *rest* is morals, civilisation, and happiness. The philosopher comes and says : I am not a man, but a mind. I attach myself to ideas. Let another occupy himself with the rest. But this *rest* is truth ; for truth, in certain matters, is a fact, a life, or it is nothing. But I reject this economist on the subject of happiness, for it is not his province ; and this philosopher on the subject of living truth, for he takes cognisance only of abstract truth. Pascal doubtless is not infallible. Pascal is not perfect ; but Pascal is a man, and it is as a man that he must be approached. His book is great, precisely because it is a man's book. The man, with Pascal, leads as in his train the *savant* and the philosopher ; but the man remains at the head of the expedition : it is for him that it is undertaken : it is his name that it shall bear. Pascal has made a book of apologetics ; I admit it. But

Pascal has, above all, traced, with a power which will never be equalled, the image of man in presence of the greatest interests and the gravest problems. This book is not only an extraordinary country, where thought, sometimes towering perpendicularly, overhangs the reader, and seems ready to crush him; this book is a moral fact, an experience, a document. Pascal has experienced nothing which a human soul has not either experienced or can comprehend. But, in order to comprehend an author, we must accept his point of view; we must identify ourselves with him; we must strip off the doctoral robe, as Peter the Great at Sardam laid aside the dignity of empire, and, like him, we must take the hatchet in our hands, at least to feel its weight. Several years ago we heard a celebrated philosopher say, in connection with a metaphysical discussion, that in order to engage in it with more success, there was a necessity for more of the spirit or the experience of *business*. This expression, at which we then smiled, we make use of now, and apply it to the present case, with more propriety as we think. Yes! we must bring to discussions like those to which Pascal's book gives rise, the spirit of *business*, of that business with which Pascal was engrossed, and which, he thought, ought to absorb all the attention of a man. We must not leave out anything which goes to the composition of man. We must bring, and throw into the discussion, his fears and his hopes, his joys and his sorrows, his external and his internal life, the mind and the soul, the man of time and the man of eternity. Thus, that is to say complete, living and personal, such questions must find us. Otherwise they will mock our efforts, and laugh at our certainties.

This brings us back to the point from which we set out.

The first editors of Pascal had not only the advantage of knowing personally the author of this book. Although, perhaps, they could not comprehend either the whole danger of certain passages, or the whole bearing of some others, they had the key of Pascal's thought and book, because they had the same faith and the same experience that he had. The suppressions, additions, and alterations which they allowed themselves, are a sort of commentary, which may in general be trusted; and let us say that without this commentary, it is not certain that Pascal's book would ever have seen the light. If the liberty which they took could be justified, it would be by the sort of juridical rigour with which the purified text of the *Thoughts* is now commented upon. Commentary for commentary, I prefer theirs. In a literary sense, their Pascal is not the true Pascal; and the work of M. Cousin is important in this view. It is so also as having restored to this famous book all its characters of personality. It is certain that we shall henceforth penetrate further into the soul of this great man. But, as regards *thought*, the Pascal of the first editors is a true and complete Pascal.

## A P P E N D I X.

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### NOTE A, p. 4.

IT seems to be assumed here that the truth of Christianity is capable of being demonstrated by an *a priori* argument. But this is precluded by the character of the religion itself, as based upon a fact or series of facts. It might indeed, by various arguments, be shown to be not improbable, or even to be more or less probable, that a God infinite in mercy would interpose for the rescue of a fallen race of His creatures ; it might be shown that there is nothing in the constitution of our minds, and nothing in what we observe of the course of God's providence, that renders such a supposition untenable. It might even be rendered extremely probable, that if any such interposition is to take place on the part of God, it must be in a way fitted at once to glorify His attributes of justice and of mercy ; and by an exhaustive process we might be brought to the conclusion that this could only be effected by means of an atonement. But all this is of necessity only negative. The essential question still remains one of simple fact, to be determined by appropriate evidence. Did Jesus of Nazareth live and obey, and suffer and die and rise again, as is stated and represented in the evangelical narratives, and was this Jesus a Divine person ? These questions, relating to a matter of history, are answered affirmatively in well-authenticated historical documents ; and, in the first instance, the Christian advocate has only to authenticate these documents. His further pleadings must, from the very nature of the case, be in the form of answers to objections ; and, logically, he is not re-

quired to anticipate objections, but must wait until they be propounded.

Still it is quite true that a man of large heart and large intellect might so understand the workings of the human mind, as to ascertain, by a kind of divination, all the doubts and the difficulties that could stagger the faith of different classes of men, and might by anticipation answer all possible objections before they were stated, and prevent difficulties before they had arisen. This is what our author seems to desiderate.

Yet it is no disparagement of our evidential literature that it is not of this character. It is of the nature of an apology to be defensive. Where there is no attack, there is no call for defence. Indeed, it seems to be not unworthy of remark, that the very fact of the Christian defence being carried on in this way gives an additional potency to the Christian cause. The objections that have been brought against it have been such as could never have been anticipated. They have been derived from every department of human knowledge and human speculation. Yet they have all been successively combated, and have either been set aside or turned to the defence of the Christian faith. Now it appears to us that, over and above the amount of proof that is derived from each objection answered, there is a strong and well-founded presumption in favour of the inviolability of the Christian system, arising from the successive answers to so many successive objections, that would not accrue from an anticipatory answer to as many objections simultaneously stated by an adversary, or simultaneously supposed by such a defender as our author describes. Objections have come from so many different quarters, and have so unvaryingly received satisfactory answers, that we are almost irresistibly led to the conclusion that every future objection will be equally answerable. Thus we do not hold our faith merely in abeyance, liable to have it shaken by every fresh objection that may be raised against it, but we hold it with an assured confidence, firmly persuaded, and reasonably persuaded, that the citadel which has been assailed in vain from so many

quarters is impregnable, and that the result of every future attack upon it will be to cover the assailants with confusion.

This is a reasonable persuasion, in strict accordance with the soundest doctrine of probability. Let us take the usual illustration made use of by writers on this doctrine. Suppose there were ten balls put into a bag, of which nine were black and one white. It might easily be shown, mathematically, that the probability is very small that, if nine balls be drawn out successively, the white should be the one that remains undrawn. Now, then, if there be ten balls, and we know nothing respecting their colour, and if nine of them successively drawn are all black, the probability is very great that the undrawn tenth is black also. The application to the case before us is very obvious. The objections hitherto produced have been all of one character,—that is, they have been all invalid,—and a strong presumption is thus generated, that any objections yet to be produced shall be equally invalid. And this presumption is greatly enhanced by the fact, that the order in which the objections are produced is at the option of the objectors, and not of the defenders. It may surely be taken for granted that the most assailable points of the Christian citadel have been discovered in the course of so many centuries, that the most obvious difficulties have already been started, and the most plausible and most probable objections have been propounded long ago. The infidel vintage is past, the gleanings-grapes only remain; and we may be sure that they are not less sour or less shrivelled than those that have already been gathered.

Thus do we rejoice in the character of the actual Christian defence. It is not of such a kind that our faith may refuse every challenge, but of such a kind that we may be confident of our being victorious in every encounter. It is thus with the Christian faith as a system, as it is with the personal faith of the believer. As with the believer tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; so each onslaught on the Christian system gives rise, by its repulse, to an increased confidence and a more assured conviction.

## NOTE B, p. 8.

This is virtually the same statement respecting geometrical reasoning that Locke, Brown, and others, have made with respect to logical reasoning in general. In one sense it is probably true, but not in that sense in which it is meant to be understood. It may be quite true that the well-known proposition with respect to the equality of the squares on two sides of a triangle containing a right angle to the square of the side opposite to that angle, is but a particular case of the far more general proposition, that things equal to the same thing are equal to one another. But when such a statement as this is made the basis of an argument against the utility of geometrical or logical study, it is always used as if it meant the same thing as that man can apprehend the one of these truths as comprehended in the other; else the conclusion were not valid, that logical reasoning can give no new information. Now *this* is not true. No human mind perceives intuitively, or without the intervention of many steps of reasoning, the connection between these two truths, or the necessary sequence of the one from the other. For aught we know, all truth may be so connected that it might be all involved in some all-comprehensive formula; but if this be so, we know that it were only to an omniscient mind that the enunciation of such formula would present or suggest all the truth comprehended under it.

Nor is it correct to say that the starting-point in geometry is a supposition. The starting-point is the definitions, axioms, and postulates; and in these there is nothing hypothetical. If I should say that a plane triangle is a figure contained by three straight lines, any two of which are together less than the third, I should assume that there can be such a figure, and the assumption would be false. If I should say that a plane triangle is a figure contained by three straight lines, any two of which are together greater than the third, I should still make an assumption,—a true one indeed, but not the less an assumption. But when I say that a plane triangle is a figure contained by three straight

lines which meet one another, I only postulate that a straight line exists between any two points whatever ; and this is no supposition, but an absolute fact. And so it is with all sound definitions. It might quite as well be said that it is a supposition that two and two are four, as that there can exist such a figure as a triangle or a circle ; and if the truths of geometry be artificial, all truth is artificial.

Our author, indeed, seems, in the close of the paragraph, happily to contradict what he had stated in the commencement of it. He admits that geometrical demonstrations are available for application to the purposes of life ; which could scarcely be the case if they were only capable of educating artificial truth, which might be falsehood if the initial supposition were erroneous. He admits, moreover, that this *method* is the only true method for the pursuit of truth ; and this, if it be not saying *too* much, is certainly saying *as* much as the most ardent lover of the mathematics could desire.

#### NOTE C, p. 9.

There is no doubt that this is, in one respect, the natural way of studying the Christian system ; that is, when it is to be studied as a system of *religion*, as distinguished from a system of *theology*. The great object of the Gospel is to minister to the wants of man ; and until these wants are felt, the Gospel can have little interest for him. It is when the Spirit has convinced a man of his sin and misery, that he is prepared to welcome the Gospel of salvation ; and until he is so convinced, he can neither understand nor appreciate that Gospel.

Yet sometimes, and perhaps not unfrequently, it is the view of the Gospel system, seen first in the other light, that the Spirit employs for producing in the heart of the sinner that conviction which enables him to appreciate the Gospel. He does not know how sinful he is, nor how evil and bitter a thing sin is, until he sees that sin, and his sins, could not be atoned for but by the deliverance to death of God's only-

begotten Son. He first learns the greatness of his sin from the greatness of the salvation, being assured that so great a sacrifice would not have been provided if a smaller could have been sufficient.

If a man were set down with the Bible in his hand, and without any previous knowledge of the Gospel system, to form a doctrinal system for himself, it is probable that he would take the method pointed out in the text, as the mathematician makes his discoveries by the analytic method ; but in order to form a complete and symmetrical system, he must be able to state synthetically what he has discovered analytically. It appears, however, that there are great evils almost inseparable from a too rigid and constant adherence to either of the methods. If a man view the system of Divine truth only *objectively*, he may be a very orthodox theologian, but he will probably be a very cold Christian. If he view it only *subjectively*, he will be in great danger of making his felt wants the measure and the standard of Divine truth. It may be very true that there is no portion of Divine truth that is not exactly fitted to supply a human want. But it does not follow that every man, or any one man, experiences all the wants of humanity. And the man who is in the habit of looking at Divine truth only as he feels his own wants, will almost of necessity overlook or undervalue a great portion of it ; and the result will be a system virtually false, because defective and disportioned.

We venture to say that this appears to be the case with a great deal of what is called the subjective theology of our day. Its language seems to be very much of this sort :— “I feel a desire to be made better, and to be enabled to hold communion and fellowship with God ; therefore the Gospel provides means whereby these ends may be effected. But I feel no desire for an atonement (in the orthodox sense of the term) ; therefore no such atonement can have been made.” But how do we know that such an atonement was not necessary in order to our being made holy, and to our being brought back into the fellowship of God ? Our desires have respect only to the end ; and suppose they were worthy of

absolute trust as indicating the real desirableness of that end, are we equally sure that they give us any correct information with respect to the means that must be employed in order to the accomplishment of that end? The condemned criminal desires pardon and restoration to the privileges of citizenship on any terms; but the sovereign can only grant pardon on certain conditions, of which he, and not the criminal, must be the judge.

And then are we sure that our desires, or felt wants, are commensurate with the supply provided in the Gospel? Suppose that *we* do not want an atonement, does it follow that none of our fellow-sinners do? Suppose that *we* can, or think that we can, keep up religious and devotional feelings in our hearts without the aid of Sabbath exercises, does it follow that this is the case with all our fellow-Christians—with those, for example, whose whole thoughts are engrossed with their daily toil?

On the subject of the right order of a theological course, the student is referred to Dr Chalmers' posthumous works.

#### NOTE D, p. 12.

This is to be regarded as an instance of Pascal's "thinking aloud," and presenting us with the process, rather than the result, of his thoughts. It is quite true that the idea of *causation* cannot be proved, any more than our own existence can be proved, or the axioms of geometry can be proved, or the fundamental propositions in any science can be proved. The fallacy of those who demand proof of those fundamental principles, is involved in their overlooking or concealing the meaning of the term *proof*. To prove a proposition, is to show its dependence upon some other proposition to be such that it must be true if that other proposition be true. I can only prove C by showing that it follows necessarily from B. But B was proved, and could only be proved, by showing its dependence upon A; and we must at last come to a proposition A whose truth cannot be proved logically, but whose truth must be postulated as axiomatic. The only *proof*

(using the term in a loose sense) of which those axiomatic truths, or first principles, are capable, is an appeal to the consciousness of every man that he cannot disbelieve them.

In our author's subsequent reasonings on the subject of Pyrrhonism this seems not to be sufficiently borne in mind. If it were, the question would be brought within a very narrow compass. If we refuse to admit axioms or intuitive principles incapable of proof, from the very necessity of the nature of proof, we cannot possibly avoid absolute scepticism. There may, of course, be a question as to what are axiomatic truths; but that there must be such truths assumed in every process of proof, follows, as we have seen, from the very nature of logical proof.

Of these axiomatic truths, the existence of causation is one. "Invariable sequence" may be all that our observation points out to us, and may be the only means that we have of determining what is *the cause* of any particular phenomenon; but the axiom that there must be *a cause* of the phenomenon lies farther back, and is equally independent of reasoning and of observation.

Our observation may be sufficient or insufficient, our reasoning may be sound or fallacious; but the major premiss of the argument remains untouched, that every *effect* must have a *cause*. This may indeed be regarded as an identical proposition, as it would be difficult to give any definition of the term "effect" that would not resolve itself into "the result of a cause;" but yet it is useful in leading us to search for the causes of such effects as are observed. We may notice that Mr Dove, in his "Logic of Faith," has attempted to *prove* this axiom; but, we venture to say, with indifferent success.

#### NOTE E, p. 18.

It can scarcely be necessary to direct the student to Bishop Butler's Sermons on Human Nature, or to Dr Chalmers' Sermon on the Expulsive Power of a New Affection.

The Bible distinctly acknowledges the necessity of all the affections being brought into subjection to one great affec-

tion, "the love of Christ." It has been too often forgotten that all the affections of our nature were originally good. There is no reason to suppose that any one of them exists in fallen man which did not exist in unfallen man. The difference is, that they are disproportioned and misdirected. The great object ought therefore to be, not to eradicate, but to sanctify them. Take, for example, the affection of anger. There are many who seem to think that this affection is always and necessarily sinful. Now that it is very frequently so, and that it is always mixed with sin, is indisputable. But yet it has a legitimate purpose and use ; and if we could conceive a man incapable of this feeling, he would be an imperfect man. We know few instances more striking of the perfect adaptation of the Bible to our human nature than the precept of the Apostle, "Be ye angry, and sin not." No one, of course, will understand this as an injunction to be angry, but as a warning that when we are angry, as it is assumed that we will be, we are in peculiar danger of sin. The emotion is not in itself necessarily sinful, but it is dangerous. We may be angry with our brother without a cause. We may be angry to an undue extent, or in undue continuance,—letting the sun go down upon our wrath. We may be angry in proportion only as the offence affects ourselves, and not in proportion to its real demerits ; and in various other ways we may be sinfully angry. Causeless anger is sin, disproportionate and implacable anger is sin, selfish anger is sin, unrestrained anger is sin ; but anger in itself is no more sin than hunger or thirst, or joy or love.

And so with the other affections of our nature. They were all originally good, as they were implanted in us by our Creator ; they are all capable of being restored to goodness under the influence of Divine grace. The object of the Gospel is not to make us cease to be men, but to make us holy men.

#### NOTE F, p. 22.

"All truth," says Cowper, "is from the sempeternal source of truth Divine." If we could trace the sunbeams far enough

back, they would all lead us to that sun from which they emanate. Already almost every branch of human science has been shown to lead to natural theology; and natural theology, at once by its uses and its imperfections, points us to the revealed theology as the necessary supplement of itself. On this latter subject there is an admirable chapter in Dr Chalmers' Natural Theology, in which he compares Revelation to the higher calculus as compared with the ordinary mathematical processes. The various sciences propose questions which they cannot solve, and more or less prepare them for solution.

This, although only an illustration, is so apt and apposite a one, that it may serve as the basis of an argument to this effect. The more the lower mathematics are advanced, and the nearer they are brought to perfection, the greater is the number of those questions which they will evolve, and the more frequent the necessity for the appeal to the higher mathematics. It is not in the nature of the lower ever to take the place of the higher, but only to make the higher more and more indispensable. And so the advance of science does not and cannot supersede the necessity of revelation, but only makes revelation the more absolutely necessary. Fourteen centuries ago a Father of the Church wrote a noble passage, which we may thus literally translate:—"Whence comes it that Paul is so constantly in the mouths of men all over the world? Whence is it that he is held in such admiration, not amongst us alone, but even amongst the Jews and the Greeks? Is it not from the power of his epistles, by which he has blessed, and is to bless, not only the faithful that then were, but also those that are to this day, and those that shall be till the last coming of Christ? And this he shall not cease to do while the human race remains. For as a wall built of adamant, so his writings fortify the Church all over the world. And he stands in the midst of us now, like some noble chieftain, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, and casting down every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. And all this he accomplishes by means of those marvellous

epistles which he has left us, so full of Divine wisdom."<sup>1</sup> If this called forth the wonder and admiration of Chrysostom in his day, how much more may it excite ours, who see his prediction fulfilled in a manner, and to an extent, of which, when he uttered it, he could scarcely have any conception! Amidst all the strange phenomena of this wonderful age, perhaps one of the strangest to the reflecting mind is the manner in which, and the extent to which, the intellect and the conduct, the modes of thinking, and feeling, and acting of men in all countries and of all classes, are, consciously or unconsciously, under the influence of this Cilician tent-maker. And as hitherto the prediction of the sagacious Father has been fulfilled to an extent far beyond what he could possibly have anticipated, so we may be well assured that the portion of it which refers to times still future, shall receive a similar and constantly extending fulfilment. The discoveries of this age may lose their brilliancy and pale their fires before the brighter light of the science of future times. The inventions that now excite our admiration by their magnitude, their usefulness, and their elegance, may perhaps call forth the equal wonder of our great-grandchildren by their littleness and their clumsiness. The men of future times may perhaps look back to our age with the same kind of pity and conscious superiority with which we review the history of semi-barbarous ages, and may congratulate themselves that it is not appointed to them, as to us, to live in the age of the infancy of invention and discovery. But differ from us as they may, and excel us as they may and almost certainly will, we may be sure that they will not feel themselves less dependent than our predecessors were, and we are, upon the Divine wisdom that is stored up in these writings. Rather, as the expansion of their minds and ideas, and the extension and complication of their social relations, bring them into contact with a larger circle of wants and duties, the more will they feel the necessity of having recourse constantly to this Divine directory.

<sup>1</sup> See the original quoted in Conybeare and Howson's "Life and Epistles of St Paul."

But perhaps the most remarkable feature of the case is the way in which even infidels are unconsciously under the influence of Christian truth and Christian morals. They attack the Bible with weapons derived from the armoury of the Bible. They say that they want no revelation, because the light of nature is sufficient to guide us to all that is necessary to be known respecting what we are to believe concerning God, and the duty which God requires of us; either not knowing, or wilfully concealing, that the light of which they speak is not the light of nature at all, but a light emanating from the very revelation which they undervalue. We want no sun, they say in substance; the ordinary daylight is quite sufficient for all our purposes. But whence comes that daylight but from the sun? Diffused through the atmosphere, refracted and reflected in countless ways, its origin is forgotten; but that origin is the very same with that of the direct beams which we can trace back to their source. "Christianity," says a writer of our own day, "has left a separate system of ideals amongst men, which (as regards their development) are continually growing in authority. Waters, after whatever course of wandering, rise to the level of their original springs. Christianity lying so far above all other fountains of religious influence, no wonder that its irrigations rise to altitudes otherwise unknown, and from which the distribution to every level of country becomes comparatively easy. Those men are reached often—choosing or not choosing—by the healing streams, who have not sought them or even recognised them. Infidels of the most determined class talk in Christian lands the morals of Christianity, and exact that morality with their hearts, constantly mistaking it for a morality co-extensive with man. And why? Simply from having been moulded unawares by its universal pressure through infancy, childhood, manhood, in the nursery, in the school, in the market-place."—*De Quincey's Leaders in Literature.*

## NOTE G, p. 29.

It is perhaps worthy of more consideration than we are aware of its having received, whether the Theism which is founded on *a priori* reasoning, be not essentially a system of Pantheism. The unsatisfactory nature of Dr Clarke's *a priori* argument is well shown by Dr Chalmers in the chapter on that subject in his Natural Theology. And his statements are perhaps equally applicable to all other forms of the same argument. But it remains to be considered whether, if an argument of this kind could be made perfectly convincing, and convincing to all, as to the existence of God, its effect would not be rather to lead us from than to a right apprehension of the nature and character of God, and of His relation towards us. A God who should be simply the depositary of all truth, is not the God with whom it concerns us to have to do. We venture to suggest that the true way, as it is doubtless the most natural way, to attain to as much knowledge of God as the light of nature can furnish, is to trace back the road that terminates in the knowledge that man was made in the image of God. Abstracting from man, as we find him, all the depravation of his character as a sinner, and all the necessary imperfection of his nature as a creature, we perhaps come as near as it is competent for us to come to the idea of God, as He is pleased that He should be known to us. Nor is there any great danger of our being led into the errors of Anthropomorphism or Anthropopathy. We may, of course, err in this line of investigation as in every other; but it does seem that while we are in this path, we are going in the right direction. Certainly this is the path that the Bible points out to us, for we may safely say that *all* its representations of God are of this character; and we cannot think that this is *merely* by way of accommodation, or from the necessary imperfection of all statements on such a subject conveyed in human language. We cannot believe that it is *merely* a figure of speech that is used, when God is represented as saying to us, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort thee;" or

that there is not a great and a true principle involved in our Lord's reasoning, "If ye who are evil know to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"

NOTE H, p. 37.

This does not appear to be quite a correct statement of the actual case. The intercourse of the risen Saviour with His disciples seems rather to have been in the way of repeatedly "appearing" to them, than permanently or continuously abiding with them. These appearances were at various times, to various numbers, and of various duration. Why He did not resume His intercourse with them on the former terms we cannot explain; but we believe that the explanation is to be sought for, and probably found, in the words that He addressed to one of them on the morning of His resurrection, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." We have no doubt that these words contain the statement of a sufficient reason for the restriction of His intercourse with His disciples during the forty days of His sojourn upon earth after His resurrection, announcing, as they evidently do, a solemn mystery respecting the position that He now occupied with reference to God and man —no longer charged with the guilt which He had borne during the previous period of His incarnation, since that guilt had been washed away by His blood, but yet awaiting the full attestation of His deliverance from that guilt, which was to be consummated by His elevation to the throne on the right hand of the Majesty on high. This reason, we have little doubt, is comprehensible, although we confess that we have not yet been able to comprehend it. We cannot believe that it had reference merely to the physical constitution of His resurrection-body, but rather to the altered relation in which He now stood towards the God whose will He came to do, and had done, and the men whom He came to redeem, and had redeemed, and to the transition-state in

which He now was between His humiliation and His exaltation.

But the actual case is just as strong in support of our author's argument as that which he puts. If an impostor could have persuaded the disciples, throughout so many interviews as He had with them, that he was the very friend whom they knew so well and loved so dearly, he could have kept up the delusion throughout a continuous intercourse of forty days or of forty years. The difficulty which an impostor would have had to encounter, would have met him at the first step. If that could have been got over, the difficulty would have become ever less and less. But this initial difficulty could not by possibility have been surmounted. There have, indeed, been strange instances of "mistaken identity;" but no one on record is comparable for strangeness to the supposed one of the disciples taking another for Jesus. It was not only necessary that the impostor should have a perfect personal resemblance to Him whom he proposed to counterfeit, but that he should have a perfect knowledge of every particular of *their* lives, and every feature of their characters. Else they would have checked him at every point. If any man whom I have never seen or known before, can, in repeated interviews, sustain the character of a person with whom I have associated on the most intimate terms for the last three years, and from whom I parted only three days ago, and if I cannot convict him of imposture by the cross-questioning of ordinary conversation, I have no recourse but to give up all belief in the difference between truth and falsehood, and fall back upon absolute and universal scepticism.

In fact, it is with this as with some other branches of the Christian evidence. Either the proof is complete, or no proof can be complete, nothing can be known, nothing can be believed. Either Christianity is true or nothing is true. My own existence and that of the world around me may be but a vain imagination. The *cogito, ergo sum* argument may be unsound in its premises and its conclusion. Be it so. If I do not exist, then certainly I do not think, I do not be-

lieve, and nothing can do me any harm. But on the supposition that I do exist, and that I think, and reason, and am responsible, I must believe what is accredited by such evidence.

### NOTE I, p. 40.

Two points may be mentioned as not unworthy of notice, as showing the suicidal character of the infidel argument, so far as it proceeds upon the supposition that the apostles were impostors. They may seem to some to be merely paradoxical, but to us they appear to be a legitimate *reductio ad absurdum*. We shall not dwell upon them at any length.

1. The first point may be thus stated,—*On the supposition that the apostles were impostors, the viler they were the more credible is their testimony.*

Experience shows us that it is almost, or quite, impossible to get twelve good men to act in perfect harmony for the advancement of a good cause in which they are all deeply interested ; but that twelve bad men should have agreed in propagating a base lie, and that no one of them, in any circumstances, should ever have swerved from its assertion, is utterly inconceivable. We do, indeed, hear of “honour among thieves,” and perhaps some are misled by the expression into the belief that honour is more prevalent among them than amongst other men. But this is not the case. The only remarkable thing is, that even in its lowest form it should exist among such men at all ; and in any other than its lowest form it has never been proved to exist amongst them. But in the case supposed, the apostles must have been the vilest and the basest of impostors ; and therefore there is a certainty that at least some one of them must have betrayed his associates, and disclosed the conspiracy. Here, then, is the dilemma to which the infidel is reduced : either (a) twelve men of the most exalted and chivalrous honour (as indicated by the unparalleled constancy with which they adhered to the engagement into which they had entered with one another) conspired to propagate a most base and blas-

phemous lie ; or (b) twelve of the vilest hypocrites and liars (as indicated by their entering into the engagement at all) exhibited during the whole of their subsequent lives the most exalted and incorruptible honour of which we have any record in human history ! Or take it thus :—If the apostles were true men, they were the basest of liars ; if they were liars, they were the most truthful of men !

It is thus that concurring testimony has a value apart altogether from the character of the witnesses, or our experience of their individual veracity, yea, rather, as we have intimated, in inverse than in direct proportion to that veracity.

2. The second point is, that *the improbability of the statement deponed to makes it all the more probable that concurrent yet independent testimony is true.*—If a man tell me that it rained at Glasgow yesterday, the thing is so probable that he may be only proceeding upon his own notion of its likelihood ; but if he tell me that on the day of the summer solstice the ground was thickly covered with snow, I know that at all events he is professing to make a statement of fact, and not a statement of mere probability ; and if I find that all the people that I meet who have been there give the same account, and if these include persons that I know to be unknown to each other, and that I know to have had no communication with each other, the *a priori* improbability of the thing stated is so far from being a bar to the credibility of the statement, that it is the very circumstance which makes it inconceivable that all could have stumbled accidentally upon the same statement. “ Truth is one, error is manifold ;” and the more improbable a truth is, the more unlikely that it should be guessed at ; the more improbable a statement is, the more unlikely that, not being true, it should be agreed in by independent witnesses.

But where, in the actual case, are the independent witnesses ? There are all those who on the day of Pentecost experienced that which was a necessary consequence of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and which could not have taken place but for that resurrection and that ascension ; and there is Paul, a witness, of all others, the most free from

all suspicion of collusion, who declared that he actually saw and heard the voice of the risen Saviour.

NOTE J, p. 41.

The department of the “experimental” evidence, as distinguished from both the external and internal evidences of Christianity, is perhaps too little regarded as a branch merely of apologetics. While it is generally admitted to be powerful for the confirmation of the faith of Christians, it is supposed to have no power to produce conviction in the minds of those who are not Christians. And this is true if we confine the term “experimental evidence” within the limits that are generally assigned to it. If we mean by it only the evidence that results from the experience of the blessed effects that result from the personal reception of the Gospel, and its felt suitableness to the wants and circumstances of fallen men, then of course an essential prerequisite to the appreciation of *this* evidence is the actual embracing of the religion. But it seems to us that a much larger department of evidence is so closely allied to this, indeed so identical in its principle *as evidence*, that it ought to be comprehended under the same term. We refer to all that evidence which is derived from the effect that is produced upon individuals, communities, and nations, by the reception of the Gospel. This is an important branch of the Christian evidence; and it is strictly experimental, differing from that which ordinarily is so denominated only in this, that in the one case each man must *make* the experiment for himself on the small personal scale, whereas, in the other case, he has only to *observe* the experiment as made already and recorded, or being made before his eyes both on individuals and on the large national scale. It may be questioned whether any branch of the Christian evidence be more extensively effective than this, not perhaps so much in convincing infidels as in arresting the attention of the careless and the worldly. Every Christian is a witness for the excellence and the Divine origin of the Gospel, a city set upon a hill, a living epistle known and read of all

men. It is to this evidence that our Saviour refers when He says to His followers, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." All writers on the evidences, and indeed all preachers of the Gospel, recognise the importance of this branch of the argument; but we do not remember any one who classes it, as we think it ought to be classed, as a very important division of the experimental evidence, as precisely the same in principle with what is usually denoted by that term. "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see," is the formula which symbolises the personal-experimental. "We know that this man was born blind, and that now he seeth," is the expression of the observational-experimental.

It is undoubtedly, however, that no conviction produced by reasoning can ever be so intimate, so operative, so Christian, as that which is produced by personal experience of the excellence of the Gospel. It is the foundation of faith, in the Christian sense, as distinguished from mere belief or conviction founded upon external proof. The latter has fulfilled its part when it has made a man a believer in Christianity; it is in virtue of the former that he becomes a Christian. This may seem contradictory, since it is only to the Christian that this evidence addresses itself. Yes; but the germ of it is contemporaneous with, or antecedent to, his embracing of the Gospel. The sinner, convinced of his sin and misery, has his mind so far enlightened in the knowledge of Christ as to perceive the suitableness of the Gospel to remedy the evils of his condition, and so he embraces Jesus Christ as his Saviour. From that hour the evidence grows stronger and stronger. There is a mutual action and reaction between his faith and his experience.

#### NOTE K, p. 48.

The student may notice how exactly Pascal, acting as he is here represented, treads in the footsteps of Bacon. The whole of the first book of the *Novum Organum* is occupied with considerations fitted to remove prejudices, and to render

the minds of men well affected towards the method which is to be propounded in the second book. "Here, then," says he, "we ought to close the *destructive* part of our work, which consists of three refutations: that of the human mind unassisted and left to itself; that of erroneous modes of proof; and that of theories, or of the prevailing systems and doctrines. Our refutation of these has been such as alone it could, by means of the evidence of causes, since no other refutation was available to us, who differ from others regarding first principles and modes of reasoning.

"Hence it is time that we should come to the art and method of interpreting nature; yet there still remains something to which we must previously advert. For, since in this first book of Aphorisms it is our design to prepare the minds of men both for understanding and for receiving the things that follow,—the field of the mind having been now cleansed, and smoothed, and levelled,—it remains that the mind be placed in a good attitude, and as it were with a benevolent aspect, towards those things which we propose. For, in a new thing, not only the prepossession of a strong contrary opinion, but also a false preconception or idea of the matter which is proposed, tends to produce prejudice. Therefore we shall endeavour to lead men to entertain good and correct opinions concerning those things which we present to them, though these opinions be but temporary, and designed to last until the things themselves be known."—*Nov. Org.*, Book I., Aph. 115.

It is therefore quite in accordance with the spirit of the Baconian philosophy that men should proceed to the examination of the evidences of Christianity with a certain amount of desire to find that it is true, founded upon a strong conviction of its excellence. To be in a state of absolute indifference is neither possible nor desirable. Now, a prejudice against the Gospel, or a dislike to it, will be far more likely to lead men to magnify and give undue weight to the objections that are brought against it, than a strong conviction of its excellence will be to lead them to overlook defects in the proofs and reasonings in its support.

## NOTE L, p. 78.

It certainly requires M. Vinet's qualification to make Pascal's statement reasonable; as otherwise truth, instead of being an absolute thing, would be made to depend upon human courage or human timidity. It ought also to be remarked, that it is not necessary that *all* the witnesses of a certain history should thus avouch their sincerity. The conclusion is, that the testimony must be rejected only if the history has not rendered itself mistress of the whole heart of *any* of those who attest it. A single martyrdom is sufficient to attest any testimony, so far as the sincerity of the testifier is concerned. And additional martyrdoms do not add to the strength of this attestation, excepting in so far as they show that the original martyrdom did not proceed from any recklessness or indifference to life in the proto-martyr. It is conceivable that in some abnormal case there should be this suicidal disregard of life, which would make martyrdom of no value as an attestation. Now, the multiplication of martyrdoms takes away this possibility, and so far they confirm the testimony already sealed with blood. But in no way can apostasy or recantation detract from the value of such testimony. The history has already shown that it has made itself mistress of the whole hearts of some of the witnesses. The fact that it has not so done with all, only shows that the minds of others were less honest, or perhaps only less courageous.

## NOTE M, p. 91.

This seems a very obvious truth, yet it is one often overlooked. It is expressed in very similar terms by Lord Bacon:—

“ The opinion which men entertain of antiquity is vain and almost self-contradictory. For the old age of the world ought to be reckoned antiquity; and this is rather the attribute of our times than of the past ages, during which the world was comparatively young. For that age was ancient

in respect of us, but new and young in respect of the world. And just as we expect a greater knowledge of business and a more mature judgment from an old than from a young man, on account of his greater experience and the variety of things that he has seen and heard, in like manner it were reasonable to expect much greater things from our age than from ancient times, if this age only knew its own resources, and would exert its strenuous endeavours ; since, as the world has been growing older, there has been an accumulation of a vast multitude of experiments and observations.

“ Moreover, it is not to be deemed of small moment that by means of distant voyages and travels, which have become common in our day, many things in nature have been unfolded and discovered which may cast new light upon philosophy. Surely it would be disgraceful to men if all the regions of the material globe, and immensity of land and sea, and innumerable heavenly bodies, have been discovered and surveyed during our days, and yet the confines of the intellectual world should be found to be as narrow as ever.”—*Nov. Org.*, Book I., Aph. 84.

See also Dr Chalmers’s Sermon on the Respect due to Antiquity.

We question whether the misjudgment which Bacon here exposes might not have been included under his “ Idols of the Forum.” It appears that the use of the terms *ancient*, *old*, etc., has a good deal to do with the undue feeling of deference to the opinions of antiquity. Even with respect to their physical age, we find it difficult to *think* of some of the ancients as other than old venerable sages ; although, of course, we *know* that they were all boys and youths once, and that some of the most distinguished of them never became old men at all.

#### NOTE N, p. 95.

“ In a certain point of view,” and with reference to the generality of men, this is doubtless true. But it is in the highest degree desirable that in all departments of know-

ledge there should be some who know all that can be known of one thing; otherwise knowledge can never be advanced. Suppose it be granted that the diffusion of knowledge among the many is the ultimate end, yet the intensity of knowledge on the part of the few is essential as a means to that end. Every person now knows a little about the doctrines of astronomy. For this we are indebted, in the first instance, to the men who have discovered these doctrines, and they never would have discovered them unless they had restricted themselves to their close and profound investigation. There is no incompatibility between the wide diffusion of general knowledge, and the profound study of special knowledge.

#### NOTE O, p. 96.

Compare the following aphorisms of Lord Bacon:—

“Concerning those things which seem common, let men consider this, that till now they have been accustomed to do nought else than to refer and accommodate the causes of those things which are rare to those which happen frequently, and not to inquire as to the causes of these latter, but to take them as granted and admitted. Therefore they do not inquire into the causes of weight, of the revolution of the heavenly bodies, of heat, cold, light, hardness, softness, rarity, density, fluidity, solidity, animation, inanimation, similarity, dissimilarity, organisation; but regarding these things as evident and manifest, they dispute and judge concerning other things, which do not occur so frequently and familiarly. But we who know well that no judgment can be formed concerning rare or remarkable things, much less new things be brought to light, without inquiring into and discovering the causes of ordinary things, and the causes of these causes, are of necessity compelled to admit the most ordinary things into our history. Indeed, we think that nothing has been more hurtful to philosophy than that things which are familiar and of frequent occurrence do not attract the attention of men, and their causes are not inquired into. So that information concerning

things unknown is not more needed than attention and regard to those that are known.

“ But as regards the utility of things, or even their baseness, those things must be received into our natural history, not less than the most elegant and precious. Nor is natural history thereby polluted ; for the sun shines equally upon palaces and dunghills, and is not thereby polluted. But our object is not to dedicate or rear a capitol or pyramid to the pride of men, but to found in the human understanding a sacred temple, after the model of the universe. And that pattern we follow. For whatever is worthy to exist is worthy also to be known, knowledge being the image of existence. But vile things exist as well as elegant things. Moreover, as the best odours, as musk, etc., are sometimes produced from certain putrid substances, so also excellent light and information often proceed from vile and sordid instances. But we have said too much of this, for this fastidiousness is childish and effeminate.”—*Nov. Org.*, Book i., Aph. 119, 120.

#### NOTE P, p. 116.

These seem to correspond pretty closely to Bacon’s “Idols.” Indeed, the idea involved in the term “images” (*les images*), is an exact transcript of that involved in the term “idols” (*eidola, ειδωλα*). That idea is not, as it is sometimes stated, that as men substitute idols in place of the true God, according to their own fancies, so we put our own imaginations in the place of truth ; but rather, that we put incorrect images or pictures in the place of *things* as they are. The term *idols* is not used by Bacon in its theological, but in its metaphysical sense, according to its proper etymological meaning. A more correct, or at least a less ambiguous, rendering of it would be *phantasms*, although, if we were translating Bacon, we should prefer retaining the term with an explanation. The great doctrine of Bacon in this part of his work is, that our minds do not come into contact with things as they are, but with phantasms or pictures of

these things more or less erroneous; their erroneousness being caused either—1, by the incapacity of human nature in general to form correct ideas of things as they are (*eidola tribus*) ; 2, the special incapacity of individual men on account of their natural or educational peculiarities (*eidola specus*) ; 3, the erroneousness of the ideas that are generated and perpetuated by the inadequacy of language (*eidola fori*) ; or, 4, the misconceptions that take their rise in philosophical systems or theories (*eidola theatri*).

#### NOTE Q, p. 118.

This subject is treated with wonderful power in Dr Chalmers' *Astronomical Discourses*. The following passage is the aptest that we can select of moderate length, and is probably one of the most eloquent in our language :—

“ Our sun may, therefore, be only one member of a higher family—taking his part, along with millions of others, in some loftier system of mechanism, by which they are all subjected to one law, and to one arrangement—describing the sweep of such an orbit in space, and completing the mighty revolution in such a period of time, as to reduce our planetary seasons, and our planetary movements, to a very humble and fractionary rank in the scale of a higher astronomy. There is room for all this in immensity ; and there is even argument for all this in the records of actual observation ; and, from the whole of this speculation, do we gather a new emphasis to the lesson, how minute is the place, and how secondary is the importance of our world, amid the glories of such a surrounding magnificence.

“ But there is still another very interesting track of speculation which has been opened up to us by the more recent observations of astronomy. What we allude to is the discovery of the *nebulæ*. We allow that it is but a dim and indistinct light which this discovery has thrown upon the structure of the universe ; but still it has spread before the eye of the mind a field of very wide and lofty contemplation. Anterior to this discovery, the universe might appear to have

been composed of an indefinite number of suns, about equidistant from each other, uniformly scattered over space, and each encompassed by such a planetary attendance as takes place in our own system. But, we have now reason to think, that instead of lying uniformly, and in a state of equidistance from each other, they are arranged into distinct clusters ; that, in the same manner as the distance of the nearest fixed stars, so inconceivably superior to that of our planets from each other, marks the separation of the solar systems, so the distance of two contiguous clusters may be so inconceivably superior to the reciprocal distance of those fixed stars which belong to the same cluster, as to mark an equally distinct separation of the clusters, and to constitute each of them an individual member of some higher and more extended arrangement. This carries us upwards through another ascending step in the scale of magnificence, and there leaves us in the uncertainty, whether even here the wonderful progression is ended ; and, at all events, fixes the assured conclusion in our minds, that, to an eye which could spread itself over the whole, the mansion which accommodates our species might be so very small as to lie wrapped in microscopical concealment ; and, in reference to the only Being who possesses this universal eye, well might we say, ‘ What is man, that Thou art mindful of him ; or the son of man, that Thou shouldest deign to visit him ? ’

“ And, after all, though it be a mighty and difficult conception, yet who can question it ? What is seen may be nothing to what is unseen ; for what is seen is limited by the range of our instruments. What is unseen has no limit ; and, though all which the eye of man can take in, or his fancy can grasp, were swept away, there might still remain as ample a field, over which the Divinity may expatiate, and which He may have peopled with innumerable worlds. If the whole visible creation were to disappear, it would leave a solitude behind it ; but to the Infinite Mind, that can take in the whole system of nature, this solitude might be nothing,—a small unoccupied point in that immensity which surrounds it, and which He may have filled

with the wonders of His omnipotence. Though this earth were to be burned up, though the trumpet of its dissolution were sounded, though yon sky were to pass away as a scroll, and every visible glory, which the finger of the Divinity has inscribed on it, were to be put out for ever,—an event so awful to us, and to every world in our vicinity, by which so many suns would be extinguished, and so many varied scenes of life and of population would rush into forgetfulness,—what is it in the high scale of the Almighty's workmanship? A mere shred which, though scattered into nothing, would leave the universe of God one entire scene of greatness and of majesty. Though this earth, and these heavens, were to disappear, there are other worlds which roll afar; the light of other suns shines upon them; and the sky which mantles them is garnished with other stars. Is it presumption to say that the moral world extends to these distant and unknown regions? that they are occupied with people? that the charities of home and of neighbourhood flourish there? that the praises of God are there lifted up, and His goodness rejoiced in? that piety has there its temples and its offerings? and the richness of the Divine attributes is there felt and admired by intelligent worshippers?

“ And what is this world in the immensity which teems with them—and what are they who occupy it? The universe at large would suffer as little, in its splendour and variety, by the destruction of our planet, as the verdure and sublime magnitude of a forest would suffer by the fall of a single leaf. The leaf quivers on the branch which supports it. It lies at the mercy of the slightest accident. A breath of wind tears it from its stem, and it lights on the stream of water which passes underneath. In a moment of time, the life which we know, by the microscope, it teems with, is extinguished; and an occurrence so insignificant in the eye of man, and on the scale of his observation, carries in it, to the myriads which people this little leaf, an event as terrible and as decisive as the destruction of a world. Now, on the grand scale of the universe, we, the occupiers of this ball,

which performs its little round among the suns and the systems that astronomy has unfolded—we may feel the same littleness and the same insecurity. We differ from the leaf only in this circumstance, that it would require the operation of greater elements to destroy us. But these elements exist. The fire which rages within may lift its devouring energy to the surface of our planet, and transform it into one wide and wasting volcano. The sudden formation of elastic matter in the bowels of the earth—and it lies within the agency of known substances to accomplish this—may explode it into fragments. The exhalation of noxious air from below, may impart a virulence to the air that is around us ; it may affect the delicate proportion of its ingredients, and the whole of animated nature may wither and die under the malignity of a tainted atmosphere. A blazing comet may cross this fated planet in its orbit, and realise all the terrors which superstition has conceived of it. We cannot anticipate with precision the consequences of an event which every astronomer must know to lie within the limits of chance and probability. It may hurry our globe towards the sun, or drag it to the outer regions of the planetary system, or give it a new axis of revolution ; and the effect, which I shall simply announce, without explaining it, would be to change the place of the ocean, and bring another mighty flood upon our islands and continents. These are changes which may happen in a single instant of time, and against which nothing known in the present system of things provides us with any security. They might not annihilate the earth, but they would unpeople it ; and we who tread its surface with such firm and assured footsteps, are at the mercy of devouring elements, which, if let loose upon us by the hand of the Almighty, would spread solitude, and silence, and death, over the dominions of the world."

Another extract we cannot withhold, as applicable to what immediately follows in the text :—

“ About the time of the invention of the telescope, another instrument was formed, which laid open a scene no less wonderful, and rewarded the inquisitive spirit of man with

a discovery which serves to neutralise the whole of this argument. This was the microscope. The one led me to see a system in every star: the other leads me to see a world in every atom. The one taught me that this mighty globe, with the whole burden of its people and of its countries, is but a grain of sand on the high field of immensity: the other teaches me that every grain of sand may harbour within it the tribes and the families of a busy population. The one told me of the insignificance of the world I tread upon: the other redeems it from all its insignificance; for it tells me that in the leaves of every forest, and in the flowers of every garden, and in the waters of every rivulet, there are worlds teeming with life, and numberless as are the glories of the firmament. The one has suggested to me that, beyond and above all that is visible to man, there may lie fields of creation which sweep immeasurably along, and carry the impress of the Almighty's hand to the remotest scenes of the universe: the other suggests to me, that within and beneath all that minuteness which the aided eye of man has been able to explore, there may lie a region of invisibles; and that, could we draw aside the mysterious curtain which shrouds it from our senses, we might there see a theatre of as many wonders as astronomy has unfolded, a universe within the compass of a point so small as to elude all the powers of the microscope, but where the wonder-working God finds room for the exercise of all His attributes, where He can raise another mechanism of worlds, and fill and animate them all with the evidences of His glory."

## NOTE R, p. 120.

This is precisely a specimen of the idols of the tribe as specified by Bacon. "The idols of the tribe have their origin in human nature itself, and in the tribe or race of men. For it is falsely asserted that human sense is the measure of things. Rather all perceptions, whether sensual or mental, are according to the analogy of man, and not

according to that of the universe. And the human intellect is like an uneven mirror, which mixes up its own nature with that of the objects which it reflects, and distorts and modifies them."

In respect of certain matters, and these the highest and most important, our knowledge must of necessity be but relative. Have we any reason to expect that man should know, or to suppose that he does know, more of the nature and ways of God, than a well-trained and sagacious quadruped knows of man, and of human affairs and politics? This is not flattering to human vanity; but is it not reasonable? Is it not a necessary result of the infinite distance that there is, and must be, between the Creator and the creature, the infinite and the finite, especially between the holy and the sinful?

#### NOTE S, p. 149.

This is an important principle, which is perhaps not sufficiently borne in mind. Even with respect to sensible objects, it is impossible to ascertain whether the impression which the same object makes upon several minds be the same, or even similar. There has been a good deal said of late about "colour-blindness," and it has been ascertained that a large proportion of men cannot distinguish certain colours from certain others. A celebrated philosopher, for example, could perceive no difference in colour between ripe cherries and the leaves of the tree on which they grew. Ordinary men perceive this difference, and agree in calling a colour green which makes a certain impression on their organs of vision, and another red which makes a different impression. But we have no means whatever of ascertaining whether the impression made by a green object on A's organs, and the idea conveyed to his mind, be similar to that made by the same object on B's organs, and the idea conveyed to his mind. In these simple cases we have no reason to believe that it is otherwise; but we can never ascertain positively that it is so. But it is otherwise with respect to

more complex ideas, and those which are not originated by objects of sense. There is no doubt, for example, that the term virtue, or justice, or love, bears a very different meaning as used by different men, and suggests very different ideas to them when they hear it. On this subject the student should ponder what Bacon says of the idols of the forum:—

“ But the idols of the forum are the most hurtful of all; they insinuate themselves into the mind by the conventional use of words and terms. Men indeed believe that their understanding regulates their choice of words; but words exercise a reflex influence on the mind itself, which has rendered philosophy and the sciences sophistical and inactive. Words are commonly adopted according to the capacity of the vulgar, and define things by such lines of demarcation as are most easily perceived by the unlearned. But when a more acute understanding, or more diligent observation wishes to alter these lines of demarcation and to render them more in accordance with nature, words oppose the change. Hence it happens that great and important arguments of learned men often degenerate into controversies about words and terms. It were wiser to begin with these, and, like the mathematicians, to give such definitions as would take away the ground of dispute. But even definitions in subjects not mathematical, cannot wholly cure this evil, since the definitions themselves consist of words, and words produce words; so that it is necessary to have recourse to particular examples, and their series and orders. Of this we shall speak presently when we come to treat of the mode of forming notions and axioms.

“ The idols which words impose on the mind are of two kinds; *first*, the names of things which have no existence; for as there are objects which have no names, so there are also names which have no corresponding objects; or *secondly*, the names of objects which do exist, but whose names are confused and ill defined, and over-hastily abstracted from the objects. Of the former kind are such terms as these: *fortune, the primum mobile, the orbits of the planets* (suppos-

ing these to be some material pathways); *the element of fire*, and fictions of this kind which originate in vain and false theories. This kind of idols is more easily dislodged, because they can be rooted out by a persevering rejection of the false theories in which they have originated.

“ But the other class is more perplexing and difficult to be eradicated; because it proceeds from bad and unskilful abstraction. For example, let us take any term—*moisture* if you please—and let us see what consistency there is between the significations of this word. We shall find that this word is nothing else than a confused indication of various properties which have no consistency with one another. For it signifies either—that which spreads itself easily over another body; or what has not determinate boundaries in itself (but takes a shape according to the substance it is in contact with); or what easily yields in every direction; or what is easily united or collected; or what easily flows or is easily put in motion; or what easily adheres to another body and moistens it, or what is easily liquified when formerly it was solid. Now when we come to use this term, according to some of the definitions flame is moist; according to others, air is not moist; according to others, fine dust is moist; according to others, glass is moist. Hence it appears that the notion of moisture is abstracted from water and common liquids without any proper verification.

“ In words also there are certain degrees of error and hurtfulness. The class of words that produces least harm is the names of substances, especially of the lowest species (as, for example, our notion of *chalk*, *clay*, etc., which are lowest species, is more distinct than that of *earth*, which comprehends the other): a class of words that produces more harm is the names of actions, as *generation*, *corruption*, *change*. The most hurtful are the names of qualities (except the immediate objects of the senses), as *heavy*, *light*, *rare*, *dense*, etc. And yet in all these classes some notions must necessarily be somewhat better than others, according as more or fewer instances fall within the range of our observation.”

## NOTE T, p. 160.

This is, perhaps, the conclusion of all our researches, whether in science or theology, if we carry them sufficiently far. We perceive various truths, but the *nexus* of these truths lies beyond our cognisance. From the want of this perception it is to be expected that various articles of our creed should appear to be contradictory. For example, we have every reason to believe in the general constancy of nature, and we have ample reason to believe in the efficacy of prayer. These seem, "to our feebleness," to be irreconcileable propositions, yet we must admit them to be both true. Even with respect to the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity, the Bible clearly teaches us these propositions: that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God, that there is but one God. We know that these propositions must be consistent with each other, and we conclude that the reconciliation would be effected if we knew more than we do respecting the mode of the Divine subsistence; that we should then know that there is a sense in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are diverse, and another sense in which They are one. But it is, perhaps, with respect to those doctrines which are considered to be characteristic of Calvinism, that we come soonest and most surely to this general result. On the question of the doctrine of God's sovereignty there is no consistent resting-place at any point between absolute predestination and absolute atheism. But on the question of man's responsibility there is just a little possibility of a consistent resting-place at any point between perfect moral freedom on the one hand, and the most detestable doctrines of heathenism on the other, as that God is the author, the guilty author, of all sin. We are, therefore, shut up to the acceptance of the two doctrines of Divine predestination and human freedom, although we may not be able to reconcile them with each other.

It is this inability to perceive the *nexus* between several

truths that constitutes what Lord Bacon calls the subtilty of nature.

“It is impossible that axioms established by argumentation can be of any value for the invention of new arts, because the subtilty of nature vastly exceeds the subtilty of argumentation.” A story told by Sir John Herschel excellently illustrates this statement:—

“The smelting of iron requires the application of the most violent heat that can be raised, and is commonly performed in tall furnaces, urged by great iron bellows driven by steam-engines. Instead of employing this power to force *air* into the furnace through the intervention of bellows, it was on one occasion attempted to employ the steam itself in apparently a much less circuitous manner, viz., by directing the current of steam in a violent blast from the boiler at once into the fire. From one of the known ingredients of steam being a highly inflammable body, and the other that essential part of the air which supports combustion, it was imagined that this would have the effect of increasing the fire to tenfold fury, whereas it simply *blew it out!*”

About the separate propositions there was no error at all. Air and water have one of their constituent elements common to both. The other element of air is a gas that is not only uninflammable, but is an immediate extinguisher of fire; whereas the other element of water is the most inflammable of all known substances. Surely, then, there could be no fault in the reasoning, that since air increases the combustion in a furnace, *much more* will water do so. But the subtilty of nature exceeds the subtilty of argumentation.

#### NOTE U, p. 195.

We cannot accept of this half-defence of Pascal. To us it seems that his argument is not only perfectly sound, but essentially the same that regulates our conduct in all the affairs of life. It involves the very consideration that our Lord enforces when he says, “What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”

The argument is very well stated by Lord Byron in a letter addressed to the late Mr Sheppard, of Frome, and published by him in his "Thoughts on Private Devotion." Amongst the papers of Mrs Sheppard were found, after her death, a prayer for Byron, in whom she had been led to feel much interest from her admiration of his genius. This paper Mr Sheppard sent to Lord Byron, and his Lordship sent the following reply, which, although it contains other matter which we regard as unsound and dangerous, we shall not alter or curtail. His statement of the Infinity-nothing argument is appropriate to the subject now before us. His remarks on the irresponsibility of man for his belief are not inappropriate, as an illustration of the principle stated in last note, that we shall fall into error unless we be prepared to admit two doctrines that may appear to us to be inconsistent and contradictory:—

"PISA, December 8th, 1821.

"SIR,—I have received your letter. I need not say that the extract which it contains has affected me, because it would imply a want of all feeling to have read it with indifference. Though I am not quite *sure* that it was intended by the writer for *me*, yet the date, the place where it was, with some other circumstances which you mention, render the allusion probable. But for whomever it was meant, I have read it with all the pleasure which can arise from so melancholy a topic. I say *pleasure*, because your brief and simple picture of the life and demeanour of the excellent person whom I trust you will again meet, cannot be contemplated without the admiration due to her virtues, and her pure and unpretending piety. Her last moments were particularly striking; and I do not know that in the course of reading the story of mankind, and still less in my observations on the existing portion, I ever met with anything so unostentatiously beautiful. Indisputably, the firm believers in the Gospel have a great advantage over all others, for this simple reason, that if true, they will have their reward hereafter; and if there be no hereafter, they can be but with

the infidel in his eternal sleep, having had the assistance of an exalted hope through life, without subsequent disappointment, since (at the worst for them) "out of nothing, nothing can arise," not even sorrow. But a man's creed does not depend upon *himself*. Who can say, I *will* believe this, that, or the other; and least of all that which he least can comprehend? I have, however, observed that those who have begun life with extreme faith, have in the end greatly narrowed it, as Chillingworth, Clarke (who ended an Arian), Bayle, and Gibbon (once a Catholic), and some others; while, on the other hand, nothing is more common than for the early sceptic to end in a firm belief, like Maupertuis and Henry Kirke White. But my business is to acknowledge your letter and not make a dissertation. I am obliged to you for your good wishes, and more than obliged by the extract from the papers of the beloved object whose qualities you have so well described in a few words. I can assure you that all the fame which ever cheated humanity into higher notions of its own importance, would never weigh in my mind against the pure and pious interest which a virtuous being may be pleased to take in my welfare. In this point of view, I would not exchange the prayer of the deceased in my behalf for the united glory of Homer, Cæsar, and Napoleon, could such be accumulated upon a living head. Do me at least the justice to suppose that

' Video meliora proboque,'

however the 'deteriora sequor' may have applied to my conduct.—I have the honour to be, your obliged and obedient servant,

"BYRON."

THE END.









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